

## The Trinitarian Covenant

### CHAPTER 1 THE TRINITARIAN COVENANT

#### The Covenant:

There are some doctrines that are explicitly taught in the scriptures. However there are also some doctrines that are implicitly taught. An example of the latter would be the doctrine of the trinity. The word trinity is not mentioned in the Bible, yet a study of the scriptures logically impels one to believe in the mystery of the trinity; three persons in one godhead. As the Westminster Confession of faith states it, “*The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture*” (Chapter 1, Section VI). The Trinitarian Covenant is one of these doctrines. It is never expressly mentioned in the scripture but by good and necessary inference such a covenant can be shown to exist.

The Apostles James stated at the council of Jerusalem, the first synod of the early church, “*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*” (Acts 15:18). To God nothing is contingent; there are no ifs. The very hairs of our head are all numbered, the sparrow cannot fall except it be by his will, and the very heart of the king is in his hands. Everything in history is working out towards the fulfillment of his eternal plan. And it is with the formulation of this plan that we are now concerned. That there is such a plan is constantly set before us in the scriptures.

Christ refers to this plan when he declares, “*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matthew 25:34). The Apostle Paul refers to this plan when he declares, “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we*

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*should be holy and without blame before him in love”* (Ephesians 1:4). The Apostle Peter refers to this plan when he taught the saints, *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you”* (1 Peter 1:18-20). And so does the Apostle John stating, *“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world”* (Revelation 13:8), and *“The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world”* (Revelation 17:8).

It is plain from all these scriptures that the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the salvation of God’s elect, the eternal kingdom of God, are all matters that were settled long before the foundations of the earth were laid. These were matters that were settled in the divine councils of eternity past. And these are matters that involve all three members of the Triune God. All three members of the trinity were involved in the work of creation. The scriptures tell us, *“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light”* (Genesis 1:3), *“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”* (Genesis 1:2), and, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:1-3). Similarly the work of recreation or salvation is the work of the Triune God. A work that was planned in the councils of eternity before the world began. As Jesus himself said when he was preaching the gospel and revealing the mysteries of salvation, *“ All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in*

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*parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 13:34-35).*

Now this plan of God, worked out in the councils of eternity past, to bring to pass the Kingdom of God is what we call the Trinitarian Covenant. It encompasses all the divine decrees to bring this to pass. It includes every detail of human history required to make this kingdom a reality. In this covenant all three members agreed to labor together throughout time and history to bring this kingdom to pass. And all three covenanted to fulfil their respective tasks towards the institution of this glorious kingdom.

### **The Purpose:**

The purpose of this covenant is to establish the eternal, theocratic kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in history is working towards that great and glorious end. God created with a purpose. God allowed Satan to tempt and deceive our first parents and permitted their fall into sin as part of his purpose. God implemented the great plan of salvation as another part of his purpose. And the culmination of it all will be the establishment of that great and glorious kingdom that will be ruled forevermore by the Lord Jesus Christ. It is wrong to think of God having created the world and ever since he has been implementing a contingency plan to counteract the consequences of the fall. One of the glories of this future glorious kingdom is that the redeemed saints will be forever praising him who has conquered sin and death and hell on their behalf. And it would be wrong to think of this covenant as merely providing for the salvation of fallen man. That is only a part of his plan, only a necessary step in his plan. The redeemed will form the citizens of this future glorious kingdom and their salvation, sanctification, and glorification are

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necessary to that end. But it is the kingdom that is the eternal purpose of God as formulated in this covenant. To think that the salvation of man and the meeting of his spiritual and eternal needs is the nexus of the covenant is to think in humanist terms. It is to put man at the center and think in terms of him. Rather we are to think theocentrically and put God first. It is God's honor, God's glory, and God's kingdom that are to be put first. As the scriptures say, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33).

### **The Parties:**

There are three parties to this covenant, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Together they have covenanted to bring to pass the eternal, theocratic kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Together they have covenanted to create the world and together they have covenanted to redeem it from sin. The Father has covenanted to call out a people that will inhabit the kingdom for all eternity. He has covenanted to justify them at the bar of his justice based on the atonement and intercession of his Son and to adopt them as his children. The Son has covenanted to die for them and to be their Savior, their Mediator, their High Priest, their Advocate; to redeem them from sin and death and hell. The Holy Spirit has covenanted to regenerate them, to work faith and repentance in their hearts, to sanctify them and one day to resurrect them and to glorify them.

### **The Promises:**

There are no promises made to men in this covenant. That is because this covenant is not made with men. That will come later in the other divine covenants. This covenant is between the members of the Godhead and the promises are to each other. In this covenant Christ promises to obey the Father and to be subject to him in the work of redemption. Therefore the scriptures say of him, "*Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of*

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*the book it is written of me,)* to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7). And therefore Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done*” (Luke 22:42). Christ who was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father subjects himself to the Father and endures the painful and shameful death on the cross because it is the will of the Father. The Father promises to call out a people so numerous and the Spirit promises to make them so glorious that “*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied*” (Isaiah 53:11). The mutual promises of members of the Godhead in this covenant revealed in scripture are far too many to list here. And they are only a fraction of what this covenant contained. Perhaps in eternity when we are in that glorious kingdom we will have a better understanding of what the Godhead committed to in this marvelous covenant.

### The Requirements:

Again there are no requirements on the part of man contained in this covenant. This covenant was not made with man and man is totally passive with respect to its provisions and requirements. The requirements for the fulfillment of this covenant are laid upon the respective members of the Godhead. All its requirements will be fulfilled by the Triune God. And that is why this covenant cannot fail. God will perform all its provisions. The eternal kingdom of God is not just a hope or dream for men struggling under the curse and laden with the consequences of sin. Man’s salvation is not a pipe dream for those facing the judgments of a holy and a righteous God of purer eyes than to behold evil and who is angry with the wicked every day. It is a glorious reality. It is a reality that cannot fail. God has covenanted to bring it to pass. Therefore Paul can say, “*For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.*”

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*And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:13-19).*

### The Grace:

That this covenant contains provision for abundant grace is obvious. In that sense like all of God’s covenants this is a gracious covenant. The kingdom that the covenant provides for is a kingdom that exists only by grace. Without the grace of God there would only be death and judgment. As the covenant of works declared, “*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*” (Genesis 2:16-17). Without the provisions of this covenant man would have died the day that he transgressed the commandments of his God. Without grace there would have been no survivors of the Great Flood. Without grace there would be no redeemed to form the covenanted kingdom. Without grace there would be no new heaven and new earth, a new earth in which dwells righteousness. Without grace there would be no return of Jesus Christ to lift the curse and bring in everlasting peace and righteousness. Without grace there would be no Messianic age in which the kingdom promises will be fulfilled. Most certainly this is a most gracious covenant.

CHAPTER 2  
THE COVENANT OF WORKS

**The Covenant:**

This is another of those covenants whose existence can only be established by good and necessary inference from scripture. The scriptural facts are plain and simple. Adam and Eve were created perfect and upright and were placed in Eden, the Garden of God. But then they were expelled and placed under God's curse and became subject to death and all manner of misery in this life and in the life to come. Why! What happened? We say that they sinned. But why should one sin have such grave and permanent consequences? There must have been some arrangement that spelled out the consequences of their actions, that set forth the blessings of obedience and the punishments for transgression. And that arrangement is what we call the covenant of works. The essence of this arrangement was extremely simple. For the substance of this covenant was that if Adam disobeyed he would die. The substance of this covenant is reflected throughout the scriptures in such texts as the following...

*"...the soul that sinneth, it shall die"* (Ezekiel 18:4).

*"For the wages of sin is death..."* (Romans 6:23).

And in contrast to the above this covenant also said, *"This do and ye shall live"*. It offered life, everlasting life upon the condition of perfect obedience. It said,

*"Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD"* (Leviticus 18:5).

*"Seek the LORD, and ye shall live..."* (Amos 5:6).

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Also it seems clear from the Biblical narrative that Adam and Eve were placed in Paradise on some kind of probationary status. This probation included a special test of their faithfulness and their obedience towards God. They were already under the moral law of God, which was perfectly inscribed in their sinless and upright hearts. They were created upright and holy and were already in harmony with God's holy law. As the scriptures teach...

*"...Be ye holy; for I am holy"* (1 Peter 1:16)

*"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14).

And being in perfect and blessed communion with God they met all the above requirements. But in addition to this the Lord laid a special test of obedience upon Adam.

*"And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (Genesis 2:15-17).

Not only did God place this special requirement upon Adam, but God providentially tested him with respect to it. God allowed Satan to tempt Eve, and Satan and Eve together to tempt Adam, regarding this particular commandment. We all know the calamitous results of Adam's failure to be faithful in this crucial test. Had he been faithful his probation might have been short and he might as a reward have been granted access to all the trees of the Garden. But he failed and the result was death; physical death as their bodies began aging and the process of the dissolution of the body started; spiritual death in that their natures became corrupt and sinful, blind to God's truth, and adverse to all righteousness; and eternal death which



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is everlasting separation from God who is the source of life and of all that is good.

### The Purpose:

Again we have to remember that, “*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world*” (Acts 15:18). God does not plan and re-plan as he reacts to the contingencies of human volition. God’s purpose in his creation is, and always has been, in its culmination. That culmination is the eternal, theocratic kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the purpose of this covenant is therefore a step towards the realization of that end. It is a step towards the fulfillment of the Trinitarian Covenant. The kingdom is a kingdom of the redeemed, of those who have been purchased by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. The creation and the fall into sin are logical and necessary steps to that end. And that is one of the purposes of this covenant. By the law of this covenant man comes under God’s righteous condemnation and is sentenced to death. By the law of this covenant all men become in need of redemption, in need of a Savior, in need of Jesus Christ. As Paul later states it,

*“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”* (Romans 3:19).

Secondly, this covenant sets up Adam as the first head, the first representative man of the human race. This of course sets the stage for the Second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ who as our representative carried our sins to the cross. The failure of the first Adam is contrasted with the victory of the Second Adam. By the terms of this covenant and the actions of the first Adam we are condemned. By the terms of this covenant and the atonement of the Second Adam we are justified. This covenant therefore forms the very basis of the atonement.

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Christ fulfilled its terms for us. And only by Christ fulfilling its terms for us can we be redeemed. Earnestly Christ prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “...saying, *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*” (Matthew 26:39). But it was not possible. The terms of this covenant had to be fulfilled. This is the covenant that says “*the wages of sin are death*” and Christ therefore died for us. This is the covenant that says “*the soul that sinneth it shall die*” and therefore Christ yielded up the Spirit on our behalf. This is the covenant that says “*without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin*” and Christ shed his blood for us. This covenant is the very foundation of the atonement. And that is one of the purposes why God made this covenant with Adam. It is a Covenant of Works and by the finished work of Jesus Christ according to the terms of this covenant we are granted eternal life.

### The Parties:

The parties to this covenant are two. They are God and Adam. Adam does not merely represent himself but he represents all of mankind. Like Jesus Christ, the second Adam, he is a representative man. Since Adam is the father of us all, and all of mankind are descended from him, we could say in the more familiar phraseology of scripture that the covenant was made with Adam and his seed. This is evident from Paul’s treatment of this matter in the Epistle to the Romans.

*“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the*

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*grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:12-19)*

In this passage Paul compares the two Adams, the first Adam, our progenitor, and the second Adam, Jesus Christ. And he makes it clear that we all died in Adam and came under condemnation due to his sin. Adam represented us and when he sinned we sinned in him and when he came under condemnation for his sin we shared in that condemnation. But by the grace of God this principle of representation is a two-edged sword. We are also represented by Christ the second Adam. Christ took our place on the cross, the accursed tree, and bore the penalty of our sins. Christ as our representative lived a perfect, sinless, holy life; he was holy, harmless, and undefiled, and we are clothed with his righteousness. Those who would reject our representation in the first Adam and its just consequences for the entire human race have a serious problem. They must then also logically deny our representation in the second Adam upon which our entire salvation is based. Paul logically connects the two in the above quoted passage. By the first Adam we lost access to the tree of life,

*"And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*

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*Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:22-24),*

and by the second Adam we have regained access to the tree of life.

*“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God” (Revelation 2:7).*

*“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2).*

Secondly, we all died in Adam because we inherited his sinful and fallen nature. His children were not born perfect and sinless fully reflecting the image of God as Adam did when he was first created. Instead they carry his image, the image of a fallen man, a twisted and corrupted version of the image of God. As the scriptures phrase it,

*“And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Genesis 5:3).*

Unlike Adam and Eve we do not enter the world either holy or sinless. As David himself confessed,

*“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5).*

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The myth of children starting life with a clean slate is just that, a myth. We are born as sinners and are in need of salvation from the womb. And that is why we need to be born again, not in the image of the first Adam but in the image of the second Adam, Jesus Christ. From all this it should be abundantly evident who this covenant was made with. It was made with Adam as a representative man. It was made with Adam and his seed. Consequently all of mankind today are still under the requirements of this covenant. With Adam we have all failed to meet the terms of this covenant and are under its judgments. But praise be to God, Christ has fulfilled the terms of this covenant for his people.

### **The Promises:**

The promise of this covenant was life. The promise of this covenant was eternal life. The promise of this covenant was everlasting bliss in the presence of God. The promise of this covenant was daily communion with God. The promise was to eternally enjoy the Garden of Eden, free from any pain, disease, or death, and from all evil. This was the promise, for this is what Adam and Eve lost when they broke the terms of the covenant.

### **The Requirements:**

The requirements of this covenant were very simple. It can be summed up in two words, perfect obedience. And this perfect obedience was required of them for only a season, for a probationary period of unknown length. The probationary period was probably relatively short. This can be deduced from several scriptural facts. One is the speed at which events moved as God proceeded with their testing. First of all the days of creation seem barely over and we have the account of the fall into sin. There is no indication of any length of days from their creation before their testing by the Satanic temptation. Events

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seem to be moving very rapidly. The angels, including Satan, as part of the creation, have themselves only barely come into existence. Yet Satan and the fallen angels (demons) have already rebelled and Satan is attempting to spread his rebellion to the human race in its infancy. It seems as if in a matter of only a few days God creates the universe, rebellion sweeps through his creation, and Adam and Eve are confronted with a moral choice, to follow Satan or to follow God. The speed of events indicates that God is certainly expediting this probationary period.

Another indication that this probationary period was probably of limited length is the fact that this test occurred while they were yet childless. Now Adam and Eve were created perfect. Their bodies were healthy and fertile and their marriage was perfect in all respects. Their bodies were certainly fertile as sterility is part of the curse that resulted from the fall into sin. Yet all these events occurred before Eve conceived her first child. This inclines one to view the fall into sin as occurring days, rather than months or years after their creation.

Thirdly Eve's unfamiliarity with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the middle of the Garden of Eden indicates that everything was still very new to her. When Satan draws her attention to this tree it is as if she had never really taken much notice of it before. The scriptures say,

*“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat...”* (Genesis 3:6).

This is hardly the reaction of a person who has spent weeks or months in the Garden and is intimately familiar with it. Being at the very center of the Garden this tree was hardly an obscure plant likely to escape notice. All these details incline one to the view that the temptation and the fall of our first

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parents occurred in the first few days after the creation was complete. And all of this leads one to believe that this pace of events means a relatively short probationary period.

A final point with respect to the length of the probationary period can be made by a comparison with Jesus Christ, the Second Adam. The first Adam was created mature and was tested almost immediately. Christ came into this world as an infant and his public ministry started at age thirty. He is consecrated into his ministry by being baptized by John and being filled with the Holy Spirit descending upon him in the form of a dove. And immediately after that Christ goes into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil. The parallel seems clear except of course that Christ overcame the Satanic temptation. The first Adam failed and his loss is our loss. The Second Adam prevailed and his victory is our victory. The Biblical account says that after the temptation in the wilderness Satan left him and there is no indication of any further attempts by Satan to corrupt Christ. Three years later Christ ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of God the Father in power and glory. Would the first Adam's probation have been similar? Would he have been tested only once and then perhaps three years later eternally confirmed in his blessed estate? We do not know of course. But what we do know indicates that if Adam had only been faithful for a limited period he could have won for the human race all that the Second Adam had to purchase with his precious blood.

### **The Grace:**

Although this is called the Covenant of Works it is still a gracious covenant. God could have required not only perfect but also perpetual obedience on man's part. In an absolute sense of course, this is what a holy God does and always will require of all men. However God only required man to supply this perfect obedience for a probationary period. Once that period was past God would have graciously sustained man so

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that he would be providentially preserved from ever falling into sin. Man would not have been exposed to the possibility of falling into apostasy in some future age and losing his favor with God. God would by his grace have preserved man in a sinless state. God would have granted man eternal life. That the first Adam failed to achieve this for those that he represented does not make this covenant any less gracious. That he could have achieved this is made plain by the fact that that is exactly what the second Adam did achieve on behalf of his people. It is called the Covenant of Works because by his works of obedience man had to pass a probationary period. It is a gracious covenant because of the grace that God would have awarded to all who met its requirements. God is a gracious God and all of God's covenants are gracious. Man has no cause not to be perpetually thankful to God for all his benefits. The Lord is always to be praised.



**CHAPTER 3**  
**THE NOAHIC COVENANT**

**The Covenant:**

The Noahic Covenant\* is the first covenant that is explicitly so identified in the scriptures. We are no longer in the realm of

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\* I have gone directly from the Covenant of Works to the Noahic Covenant. This is because it is difficult to precisely define what is a Biblical covenant. There are a large number of covenants mentioned in the Bible but a good many of these are between men and therefore are not divine covenants. But of commitments made between God and man where do promises and prophecies leave off and covenants begin? Without either a precise definition or an explicit statement in the text that can be difficult to decide. And that leaves us with another issue to be dealt with. After the fall into sin and the failure of our first parents to keep the Covenant of Works God makes a promise to them of the hope of future salvation. This promise is the first announcement of the gospel and states, "*And the LORD God said unto the serpent, ... And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Genesis 3:14-15). Here is the first promise of the coming of the Messiah, who, born of a woman, will crush Satan, and someday deliver man from the consequences of the fall. Luther called this the "protoevangelum". This divine, promise, commitment, and prophesy is also called the Edenic Covenant. This promise/covenant is connected with the concept of blood sacrifice. This is evident from the text that states, "*Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them*" (Genesis 3:21). Adam's and Eve's sin and shame were covered by the skins of these animals, whose blood was slain to provide them with a covering. The covenant they broke had said, "*...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 2:17). Yet in the day that they did eat of the forbidden fruit it was the animals that died, as it were in their stead. The principle of atonement through a substitutionary blood sacrifice as a basis for deliverance from the death sentence of the Covenant of Works was therefore established directly after the fall in this "covenant". This is confirmed again in

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“good and necessary inference” from scripture but rather dealing with positive statements from God’s word.

*“And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth”* (Genesis 9:8-17).

In this covenant God promises to preserve the earth until the end of the age. He will restrain his wrath and his holy judgments on sin so that never again will there be an end of all

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the Biblical text as succeeding generations continued to practice the ritual of blood sacrifices unto God (see Genesis 4:4 etc.). The requirements of this covenant made with Adam and Eve and their posterity therefore required faith in a future atonement by the true “Lamb of God”.

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flesh. And as a means to this end the Lord institutes civil government as an additional restraint upon sin. He commands Noah, *“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”* (Genesis 9:6). This institutes government as an earthly ministry of justice to execute God’s wrath upon sin in the here and now. When civil government ceases to exercise any restraint upon evil then the end of the age will come and God will again judge the earth this time not by water but by fire. As Paul warned the Thessalonian Christians,

*“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He\* who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8 NKJV)

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\* The translators have erroneously capitalized this “he” assuming that it refers to the Holy Spirit. But Christ promised that the Holy Spirit would be with his people until the end of the world saying, *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”* (John 14:16-17). It is inconceivable that as long as there are Christians on this earth that the Holy Spirit would forsake them and leave this earth. What Paul is actually referring to is civil government.

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The mystery of lawlessness, the conspiracy of Anti-Christ of which Paul is speaking, is being restrained by civil government. When God providentially takes that restraint away at the end of the age it will result in the day of Anti-Christ and the return of Jesus Christ as the Lion of the Tribe of Judah to judge the world in righteousness.

Finally God made this covenant as his response to Noah's first sacrifice after the flood. Since this covenant was made in association with a blood sacrifice it seems that faith in such a sacrifice with respect to the future "*Lamb of God*" was the basis of this covenant. Like all of God's covenants this covenant is full of grace. And all of God's grace is based upon the shed blood and atoning death of Jesus Christ.

### **The Purposes of the Covenant:**

As all of God's covenants made in time this, covenant was made as a step towards fulfilling that covenant made in eternity, the Trinitarian Covenant. God is a holy God "*...of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*" (Habakkuk 1:13). He cannot tolerate sin and his holiness breaks out against sin and sinners. This is what occurred in the great flood when, except for Noah and his family, there was an end of all flesh. If there had actually been an end of all flesh then God's purposes would never have been fulfilled. The promised seed of the woman would never have come and there would have been no human race left to redeem. By his grace (Genesis 6:8) God preserved Noah and his family but the wickedness of the generation of the flood was a serious problem for the continuity of the race and the fulfillment of God's purposes. Man could by his sin bring such judgments upon himself that history would come to an end. God graciously addresses these concerns in this covenant. The chief purposes of this covenant is to provide for the preservation of the creation from destruction for its sin until the Messiah can come and the elect are all called out. That

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is the essence of this covenant and all the other aspects of this covenant are subservient to that end.

The second purpose of the covenant is to provide a means that will contribute towards the fulfillment of its primary purpose. That secondary purpose is the institution of civil government. That secondary purpose is to provide an additional restraint on sin through the sword of the civil magistrate.

The third purpose of this covenant is to provide man with a sign of hope in the heavens. Since the days of Adam man has struggled under the curse. Now man's sin has almost brought about the end of all flesh. The entire creation has been deluged and destroyed. The plant and animal kingdoms and the human race itself must be rebuilt almost from scratch. It will be thousands of years before the Messiah will come. And when he does come, it will be to be despised and rejected of men, and to give his life as a ransom for many. It will be many more centuries, yea millennia, before he will return to lift the curse and bring in everlasting righteousness. It will be eons before Christ will return to establish his kingdom, destroy the works of the devil, and restore man to paradise. During this period as Paul states it, "*...the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now*" (Romans 8:22 NKJV) awaiting the new creation. Man is going to have to have a lot of faith and a lot of patience for, "*...with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*" (2 Peter 3:8).

And during this long wait man will continue to groan under the curse and suffer the consequences of his sin. And every time there is a rainstorm men will be reminded of the forty days and nights of rain of the great flood. And they will fear and tremble at the possibility of another great judgment falling upon them. But as the sun breaks through the rain clouds they will see the rainbow in the heavens. And to the faithful who remember God's covenant it will be a sign of God's mercy to his creation. It will be a token of God's covenant with his creation. It will be a reassurance that never again will God destroy all flesh. It will be a comfort to know that the creation

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will continue, season after season, until the Messiah has come, the elect have been called out, and all of God's gracious purposes have been fulfilled. To the faithful this will be a sign of hope to carry them through the generations until Christ returns in power and glory to establish that eternal kingdom that is the hope of the saints.

The fourth purpose of this covenant is to provide man with a standard of God's covenant faithfulness. God will continue to make covenants with man. Many of them will take ages to come to fruition. Generation after generation will pass without seeing the fulfillment of the promises. Men will become discouraged and wonder if God has forgotten his covenant. But the Noahic covenant is a covenant that God is fulfilling every day. Year by year, as the celestial bodies continue in their courses and the seasons roll by endlessly, it is a continuous testimony to God's covenant faithfulness. And generation after generation as God restrains his wrath in spite of man's great wickedness and the creation continues, men can take comfort that God is remembering his covenant. Whatever befalls the children of men the faithful can always take hope in God's promises knowing that they will all be kept as faithfully as God has kept his covenant with Noah.

Psalm 89 is a good example. In the writer's day the Davidic dynasty has fallen on hard times. It seems as if God has forgotten his covenant with David. But God's word comes to the author with a message of comfort saying,

*“My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven”* (Psalm 89:34-37).

God has not forgotten his covenant with David. God will maintain all his covenant promises in spite of the present distress. Things may appear to be dark and the prospects may

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look very bleak but in due season God will remember his covenant. And even as God remembered his covenant with Abraham and delivered the children of Israel from Egypt so will he deliver from the present afflictions. And the assurance of all this is a comparison with the promises of the Noahic Covenant. Even as God has maintained the sun and moon in their courses as a witness to his covenant faithfulness so will he maintain the seed of David on David's throne forever. Someday the Messiah will come and will rule forever. Someday the Messiah, born of the seed of David, will sit on David's throne and rule forevermore, even as the angel promised Mary, "*And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end*" (Luke 1:31-33).

In Jeremiah's day the Northern Kingdom, Israel has long disappeared into Assyrian captivity and now her Southern sister Judah has gone into the Babylonian captivity. It seems that God is casting off his people and has forgotten his covenant with them. But through his prophet God comforts them saying,

*"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD"* (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

God reminds them that as he has kept his covenant with Noah and maintained the sun, moon, and stars in their courses

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so will he maintain Israel as the covenant nation forever. God uses his faithfulness in keeping the Noahic Covenant as a standard by which men can judge his faithfulness in keeping all his other covenant obligations. Surely God is gracious to give us such a constant witness in the heavens to his covenant faithfulness.

### The Parties:

The parties to this covenant are four. First of all there is God. Not only is God always an indispensable part party to every divine covenant but he is always the initiator. Every divine covenant is unilaterally promulgated by God. The fact that man is a party to the covenant is by sheer grace. It is always God's covenant not man's.

The second party to the covenant is Noah. It is made with Noah because, *"...Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD"* (Genesis 6:8). But like all of God's covenants with man it is made with a representative man. As Adam represented the race in the Covenant of Works so Noah represents mankind in the Noahic Covenant. As the scriptures state it, *"And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature..."* (Genesis 9:8-10). The covenant is with Noah and his sons, it is made with Noah and his seed. It is made with all mankind for we are all descended from Noah who is in a fashion a second Adam, a second father of the race. All mankind can look into the heavens and see the rainbow and know that this is a token of a covenant that God has made with them, even with their generation. All mankind can remark on the regularity of the seasons and on God's providential preservation of his creation and know that is because of God's covenant faithfulness to them. They are included in the covenant.

Finally, the fourth party with whom the covenant is made with is *"with every living creature"*. The creatures that had



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populated the Garden of Eden had been immune from death and pain before the fall. When Adam sinned and came under God's judgment it was they who died to provide a covering for Adam and Eve. When the ground was cursed for Adam's sake it was the animals who shared in that curse. They became subject to pain, and to death as well, although they had not sinned. And in the great flood it was the animals too who were annihilated in the waters of death except for a few of each species preserved by God in the ark. Now God includes them in the covenant. They are a party to this outpouring of God's grace. They too will be spared another universal deluge. They too will be exempted from another "*end of all flesh*". They too will be partakers of God's covenant mercies.

These are the parties to this covenant. They had nothing to say about it. They did not initiate or negotiate it. They are all included by God's grace and have only to be thankful. They are all the recipients of God's mercies and of his sovereign grace. And this is the second covenant that God has made with all men. All men are included in the Covenant of Works and all men are comprehended in the Noahic Covenant. There has never been, and never will, be a man who cannot regard the witness of the heavens and thank God for this covenant. All future divine covenants with man are made with a chosen subset of mankind. This covenant is made with all men. This should teach us something with respect to the issue of "common grace". For here, in this gracious covenant, God covenants with all mankind without exception.

### **The Promises and Blessings of the Covenant:**

The promise of the covenant is that God will preserve the earth until the end of the age. Never again will God allow the "*end of all flesh*" to threaten the continuity of the human race. God covenants that history will run its course and that the grace and mercy expressed in the purposes of the Trinitarian Covenant will come to pass. As God receives Noah's first

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blood sacrifice after the flood, offering up to the Lord of the few precious clean animals that have survived the flood, the Lord responds, “*And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease*” (Genesis 8:21-22).

There is more promised here than bare continuity of existence. God promises to limit his just curse on man’s sin for the remainder of man’s existence in this age. And God covenants that the heavenly bodies will continue in stable orbits until the end of the world. The sun will continue to rise every morning to warm the earth and make it fruitful. The earth will continue in her course and the seasons will roll by year by year without interruption. Springtime will come every year and harvest time will follow like clockwork and never again will a cataclysmic judgment of the Lord interfere with that cycle until the very end of the age.

The second blessing of this covenant is the institution of civil government. No more will man be faced with the anarchy of human wickedness. No more will the Cains and the Lamechs escape all human retribution for their crimes. God had put a mark on Cain “...lest any finding him should kill him” (Genesis 4:15), because, “...Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). But now under the terms of this covenant God raises up civil magistrates, as his ministers, to execute his wrath upon sin. As Paul later puts it to the Christians of Rome, “*For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil...For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*” (Romans 13:3-4). This has been a great blessing to mankind and God has providentially used this restraint to ensure that there will never

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be another generation like the generation of the flood. Of that generation we are told, *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5).

The third blessing of the covenant was that man was given permission to eat animal flesh. Up to this time men were vegetarians. God had told Adam and Eve, *“And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat (i.e. food)”* (Genesis 1:29). And God had bountifully provided such food for them. *“And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food”* (Genesis 2:8-9). Originally the whole creation was vegetarian as there was no death in the Garden of Eden before sin. Even the animals were all vegetarians as God had ordained, *“And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat”*. (Genesis 1:30). We do not know when the animals first departed from this rule and became carnivorous. But we do know that this is the first mention of man, by divine permission, becoming a meat eater. That this is the first such authorization seems clear from the details. God not only grants permission stating, *“Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things”* (Genesis 9:3), but he includes a limitation to fully instruct Noah in this new privilege, saying, *“But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat”* (Genesis 9:4). This limitation seems to be a creation ordinance because it transcended the ceremonial law it was later incorporated into. When the ceremonial had passed away the Council of Jerusalem maintained this limitation for the new Gentile believers saying, *“...that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from*

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*blood*” (Acts 15:20). As life under the curse was becoming harder God graciously expands man’s food supply.

### The Requirements:

The first requirement of the covenant was to repopulate the earth. God’s purpose from the beginning was to redeem himself a people from among the children of men. He had commanded Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. But the catastrophe (humanly speaking) of the flood had intervened and had wiped man off the face of the earth except for a handful of souls that God had graciously preserved according to his covenant mercies. So now God again gives the primeval command, *“And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth”* (Genesis 9:1). The commandment is crucial and therefore God repeats it again, *“And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein”* (Genesis 9:7). This was required for several reasons. First, as noted above, that the original creation mandate to populate the earth might be fulfilled. Secondly, that the seed of the woman might be perpetuated so that some say the Messiah would come and Satan and his works be overthrown. And thirdly, that the race might continue until all the elect have been born and called out to form the citizenry of the future glorious kingdom of God.

The second requirement was to institute civil government as a restraint upon sin. The Lord told Noah, *“And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man”* (Genesis 9:5-6). This is a command. For the first time in human history man is given authority to punish sin. This necessitates the institution of civil government to act as a restraint upon sin by punishing sin in this life. This was required that the prevalence of sin in the generation of the flood

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might never be repeated and another universal judgment of God on this earth be necessary.

### The Grace:

This covenant is filled with grace. Like all of the divine covenants it is a gracious covenant. All God owes any man is his justice. And by that justice, according to the Covenant of Works, all men deserve death. When the end of all flesh was being decreed we read in the scriptures, *“And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD”* (Genesis 6:7-8). But Noah found grace and he and his family were spared as brands plucked from the burning or as Paul later phrases it, *“...as a remnant according to the election of grace”* (Romans 11:5). And through that remnant of only eight souls God’s gracious purposes would someday be completely fulfilled. And from that remnant someday the Messiah would come. And now in this Covenant, God covenants that his grace will be sufficient that never again will universal judgments threaten the human race.

And in addition God graciously provides man with another restraint on sin. This is the second of the three institutions ordained of God, the family, the state, and the church.. And what a blessing it has been. Even when government is pagan and godless it has still been a blessing. The Apostle Paul could appeal to his rights as a Roman citizen and use them to facilitate his ministry. One needs only to study those periods of human history when civilization broke down into a state of anarchy to see what a blessing the institution of civil government has been. One needs only to study the lawless, reprobate, and vice-ridden history of America’s Western frontier in the last century to appreciate the blessings of government. And all of this is by the sheer grace of God.

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And in addition God has graciously provided also for man's temporal needs. He who has made us body and spirit graciously provides for both. God had cursed the ground for Adam's sake. And now God ameliorates the effect of this curse by allowing man to supplement his food supply obtained by the sweat of his brow from the barren and cursed soil. Man is given permission to eat animal flesh as well. As Christ said with respect to divorce, "*from the beginning it was not so*". God's original creation ordinance did not allow for killing. But God recognized the reality of life in a sinful world and grants this permission to man.

And finally God gives man a perpetual sign of this covenant to comfort him throughout the ages. God sets his rainbow in the heavens as a mutual reminder of the promises of this covenant. We can see the rainbow and remember God's promises and take comfort as we groan under the consequences of sin. And God will see his bow in the heavens and remember his covenant with Noah and restrain his wrath and spare man the fullness of his holy and righteous judgments, at least for a season. In all this we see nothing but grace, nothing but the unmerited favor of a merciful God to his sinful creatures here below.

**CHAPTER 4**  
**THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

**The Covenant:**

As the Noahic Covenant, this covenant is explicitly identified for us in scripture. And as the Noahic Covenant we have to look in more than one place in the scriptures to find all of it. The key passages are found in Genesis chapters 15 and 17. In many ways the situation is similar to the times in which God made his covenant with Noah. Noah represented a small island of godliness awash in a sea of iniquity. Abraham represented a small island of faithfulness to the true God awash in a sea of idolatry and polytheism\*. God preserved Noah and destroyed the generation of the flood. God spiritually preserved Abraham but did not destroy his generation. The difference was the Noahic Covenant, whereby God restrained his wrath as he continued to work in history to fulfil the purposes of the Trinitarian Covenant. The similarity is that in both cases he preserved a remnant of the seed of the woman to fulfil his purposes in history. The similarity is that he made covenants with both men.

The basis of the Covenant of Works was that man had to be perfect before God. God is a holy God and this requirement has never changed. All men are under this Covenant and its requirements. Therefore this also forms the requirement of the Abrahamic Covenant. God addresses Abraham as he institutes this covenant and commands him saying, "...*I am the Almighty*

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\* The only other faithful believer, outside of Abraham's family, mentioned in scripture in Abraham's day is Melchizedek. Because human longevity declined slowly after the flood there is a possibility that Melchizedek is Shem, the eldest son of Noah. If so it not only provides a connection between these two men with whom God made covenants but it shows the rapidity with which the world apostatized from the faith of Noah after the great flood.

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*God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee” (Genesis 17:1-2). Walking perfectly before God is the condition for coming into covenant with him. How can this be? Abraham is a son of the first Adam and has inherited his sinful nature and was conceived in sin and born in iniquity. How can Abraham walk perfectly before God? The answer is given in the covenant itself.*

*“And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:4-6).*

The answer is justification by faith. Abraham’s faith in God’s promises was “*counted...to him for righteousness*”. And like the Edenic Covenant that was sealed with the blood sacrifice of the animals that provided a covering for Adam and Eve; and like the Noahic Covenant that was God’s response to Noah’s blood sacrifice of clean animals after the flood; so was the Covenant between God and Abraham sealed with a sacrifice.

*“And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not...And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the LORD made a covenant with*



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*Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates”* (Genesis 15:7-10,17-18).

The covenant and its promises, particularly the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed forever, were sealed by this sacrifice. The token of the covenant itself would be the ritual of circumcision. Therefore it is called “...*the covenant of circumcision*” (Acts 7:8) by Stephen in his oration before the Sanhedrin. And therefore Christ himself would say of circumcision that it is not “*of Moses, but of the fathers*” (John 7:22). For God commanded Abraham,

*“...Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you”* (Genesis 17:9-11).

This bloody ritual on the male organ of generation expressing both the symbolism of shed blood, the promised seed of the woman, and the cutting away of the body of original sin transmitted from generation to generation, would reflect the very heart of the covenant until the coming of Christ who would fulfil it all.

### **The Parties:**

The parties to this covenant seem simple. As the scriptures state it, “*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee*” (Genesis 17:7). There are only three parties to this covenant. They are God, Abraham, and Abraham’s seed. The first two parties are clear but there have been centuries of contention

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about the third. Just who are the seed of Abraham? It seems simple; they are the physical progeny of Abraham. But historically it has never been that simple. Even Abraham seems to have been confused on the subject. When God states his promise of the coming miraculous birth of Isaac by his legitimate wife Sarai, Abraham's response is, "...*O that Ishmael might live before thee!*" (Genesis 17:18). And in the next generation there is similar confusion. Even though Isaac had been told, "...*the elder shall serve the younger*" (Genesis 25:23), he insists on attempting to give the birthright to Esau. If the seed of Abraham means his physical descendants it clearly does not include all of them. As Paul explains it,

*"Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"* (Romans 9:6-13).

Paul is saying not all of the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel) are, covenantally speaking, the "seed of Abraham". Only those who are the "*children of the promise*" are deemed such. Who are these children of the promise? Paul names Isaac and Jacob. These are physical descendants of Abraham but they are more also. They were God's elect. God chose Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau. God does the choosing. He chose Abraham and made a

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covenant with him. And he chooses who Abraham's seed are and who are included in the covenant. As Paul states it just two verses later, "*For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion*" (Romans 9:15). But it is important to note that according to his covenant God chose them from among the physical seed of Abraham.

And so it was from Abraham to Christ. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "*...salvation is of the Jews*" (John 4:22). When a Phoenician woman implored him for the covenant blessings Christ answered, "*It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs*" (Matthew 15:26). The covenant and its blessings were restricted to those who were Abraham's descendants and those who joined themselves to them. To those who like Rahab in Jericho, and Ruth in Moab can say, "*...thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God*" (Ruth 1:16). As Christ brought the Messianic blessings to Israel he always related them to the Abrahamic Covenant. When he healed the woman in the synagogue on the Sabbath day and was rebuked by the ruler of the synagogue Christ responded,

*"The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"* (Luke 13:15-16).

And when Christ sought out Zacchaeus, ministered to him, and received his repentance, and the multitude questioned his dealings with such a sinner, Christ answered,

*"...This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham"* (Luke 19:9).

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It is by entering into the Abrahamic Covenant and its blessings that men receive the salvation of God. And so it was all through the time of the Old Covenant. But how are things now. Has all this changed? What happened at the time of Christ? What happened when the call of the gospel went out to the Gentiles? Did all this change? The answer is no. But what has happened is that this issue has become more confused than ever.

The Phoenician woman prevailed in her pleadings with Christ.

*“And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour” (Matthew 15:22-28).*

How could this be? Jesus had just said that it was not proper to give the covenant blessings to strangers and that salvation is of the Jews. Jesus’ own answer to this apparent contradiction is that it is because of her great faith. The Abrahamic Covenant was based on justification by faith and those who exercise the faith required by the covenant are the children of the covenant. As Paul taught the Galatians as they wavered between the importance of faith and works,

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*“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Gal 3:6-9).*

But if anyone regardless of their descent from Abraham can receive the blessings of the covenant based on faith, is the covenant now made void? Is the issue no longer who are the seed of Abraham? Is the only issue now who has the faith of Abraham? No, that is not what Paul is teaching. He explains this mystery another way. He says,

*“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).*

Paul notes that when the covenant was made with Abraham and his seed the word seed was in the singular. From this he argues that this referred to one special son of Abraham, Jesus Christ. From that he goes on to teach that if we are Christ's, that if we are united by faith to Jesus Christ, then we have become Abraham's seed.

*“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:26-29).*

Now it is at this point that the confusion generally enters. We are now told that physical descent from Abraham means nothing. We are told that being part of Israel according to the

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flesh, means nothing. We are told that the only thing that matters is faith. But that is not what the Apostle was teaching. And then to compound this we are told that there are two Israels. We are told that there is a physical Israel and a spiritual Israel. We are told that the former means nothing and that the latter means everything. And then we are told that the latter is the church, the assembly of those that believe. And this then sets up a false dichotomy between the two Israels, between national Israel and the church. This dichotomy is prevalent among both dispensationalists and the Reformed. The former say that national Israel is temporarily set aside until the church age is over. The latter say that national Israel is permanently set aside. But Paul makes it clear that national Israel is not set aside. He echoes Jeremiah, who said,

*“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD”* (Jeremiah 31:35-37).

Stated in the context of the prophecy of the New Covenant this seems to be a pretty decisive statement. The New Covenant does not mean that national Israel is cast away. And this exactly what Paul restates in the time of the New Covenant.

*“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew”* (Romans 11:1-2).

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He explains what is happening to Israel according to the flesh and to the Gentiles under the figure of an olive tree.

*“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:16-27).*

Now the olive tree represents Israel, the covenant nation. It represents the covenant people of God. It represents the seed of Abraham. Paul does not say that it has been cut down or cast away. Neither does Paul say that there are two olive trees, that there are two Israels. Paul will have none of these dichotomies that are so popular when dealing with this subject. Paul says

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that the olive tree stands and God has not cast away his ancient people Israel. What God has done is merely to prune out the unbelieving branches. Even as he pruned out Esau that “*profane person*”; even as he pruned out the generation in the wilderness that “*could not enter in because of unbelief*”; so he is pruning out those of Paul’s generation that will not believe in Jesus Christ, the Messiah. God has not cast away national Israel but from every generation he reserves to himself a remnant of them according to his electing decrees.

*“God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace”* (Romans 11:2-5).

And what of all the Gentile believers? And what of the New Testament Church? Paul does not say that they constitute something separate from Israel. He says they have become part of Israel. He says that they have been grafted into the olive tree. Nothing has changed in principle. As always, as in every generation, Gods has pruned the unbelievers out of his covenant people. Faith is the essential requirement of the covenant. And as in every generation God is grafting in those like Ruth, and Rahab, and Naaman, who profess true faith in the God of Israel. What has dramatically changed is the scope of these operations. There has been massive pruning as the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah. And there has been extensive grafting in as the gospel has gone forth from Jerusalem to the nations of the Mediterranean Sea. But what is common to all is that they are part of the olive tree. They are part of the one true Israel of God. They all partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree.



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They all partake of the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant as his seed.

Consistently the New Testament teaches that we all need to become the seed of Abraham to be saved. Salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is a blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. We all need to enter into that covenant. God will save his people but he will only save them as the “seed of Abraham”. When Israel grievously sinned in the wilderness God was prepared to wipe them out. But he would raise up a new seed of Abraham through Moses.

*“And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation”* (Exodus 32:9-10).

When Christ’s generation was so grossly unprepared for the coming of the Messiah they came under the rebuke of Christ’s forerunner, John the Baptist. He warned them severely.

*“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the ax is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire”* (Matthew 3:7-10).

Unfruitful individuals may be cast out but there will always be a seed of Abraham. And if all of national Israel should prove unworthy God would if necessary raise up seed to Abraham from the very stones that his covenant might to kept and his purposes fulfilled. And to the degree that national Israel was

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unfaithful God has grafted in the Gentiles that the olive tree might flourish and that according to his covenant, the seed of Abraham might be as the stars of the heavens and as sand on the seashore for multitude.

The covenant was made with Abraham and his seed. And what a blessing it is that we can by faith be joined to Jesus Christ and become the seed of Abraham and enter into those precious promises and inherit that kingdom that shall have no end.

### The Promises and Blessings of the Covenant:

The Abrahamic Covenant is rich in promises. The basic promise is that for Abraham and for his seed, God would be their God, and they would be his people. The seed of Abraham will be the people of God. For God promised Abraham,

*“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee”* (Genesis 17:7).

But how can this be? God is a holy God and we are sinners. There is of course a sense in which God is the God of all men. God is over all men as their Creator and since the fall into sin as their Judge. But to have God be our God in the sense of the covenant, in the sense of being a Father to us and we his children seems impossible. But that is made possible by a second promise of the covenant. God promises that he will justify us in his sight and declare us righteous before the bar of his justice if we have faith in him, in his promises, and especially in his (coming) Messiah.

These two promises are the essence of the whole covenant. They promise that God will be our God and will fellowship with us, as he once did with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before the fall. They promise that God will give us a

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righteousness not our own, so that we will be fit to fellowship with him and be the children of a thrice holy God.

As noted above this covenant is rich in promises and we will note at least three more here that form another part of this covenant. The first is the promise that his seed would be as numerous as the sand on the seashore or the stars in the heavens. God repeatedly renewed this covenant promise to Abraham.

*“And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered”* (Genesis 13:16).

*“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be”* (Genesis 15:5).

*“As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee”* (Genesis 17:4-6).

*“That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies”* (Genesis 22:17).

The next promise is the promise of possession of the land of Canaan by Abraham and his seed in perpetuity. This promise is also frequently repeated and renewed throughout scripture.

*“And the LORD said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and*

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*westward: For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever...Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee”* (Genesis 13:14-15,17).

*“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates”* (Genesis 15:18).

*“And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”* (Genesis 17:8).

And the third promise in this trilogy of promises is the promise that some day out of Abraham’s seed will come the Messianic King. This is the promise that one of his descendants will be the promised Messiah. The definition of the promised seed keeps narrowing through the history of redemption. First we have the promise of the Edenic Covenant concerning the seed of the woman that will crush the serpent’s head. Then Abraham is told that the genealogy of this promised Messiah will run through him, the Messiah will be of the seed of Abraham. And the line keeps narrowing. Abraham is told that it will run through Isaac and not through Ishmael. In the next generation again Isaac and Rebecca are told that it will run through the younger (Jacob-Israel) and not through the elder (Esau). Jacob at the end of his life prophesies that it will run through Judah and finally God promises David that it will run through his line. A greater son of David will be the Messianic King that will sit on David’s throne forevermore.

*“And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee”* (Genesis 17:6).

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*“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice”* (Genesis 22:18).

This may not seem as clear to us in these Old Testament promises as those concerning the land etc. but they were abundantly clear in the minds of many inspired writers. The fulfillment of this promise is noted by several New Testament authors. Matthew notes it starting his gospel by stating,

*“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham”* (Matthew 1:1).

Matthew starts his gospel by identifying Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ (i.e. the Anointed One, the Messiah). He then immediately identifies him as the promised seed of Abraham and the promised seed of David. Any believing Old Testament Jew would have immediately understood what Matthew was saying. He would have understood that Jesus was being set forth as the fulfillment of these promises of the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants.

In the Magnificat, as Mary rejoices over the impending birth of Jesus the Messiah, she relates it to the Abrahamic Covenant saying,

*“He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever”* (Luke 1:54-55).

Similarly, it was so connected by Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist.

*“And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been*

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*since the world began: That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham”* (Luke 1:67-73)

Peter, preaching in the temple after the healing of the lame man, also connects the coming of Christ with the fulfillment of this promise in the Abrahamic Covenant.

*“Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities”* (Acts 3:24-26).

And finally the Apostle Paul mentions this in the book of Hebrews saying of Christ,

*“For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham”* (Hebrews 2:16).

To all these inspired men it was clear that the coming of Christ was the fulfillment of God’s covenant promise to Abraham, that out of his seed would come the Messiah. And as will be noted subsequently in the section on the purposes of the covenant this trilogy of promises is one related whole. Together they provide the land, the people, and the king for the promised kingdom.

### **The Requirements of the Covenant:**

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The fundamental promise of the covenant is that God will be our God and we will be his people. And the fundamental requirement of the covenant is that we have to be perfect and sinless before God. As God told Abraham when he announced the covenant to him, “*walk before me, and be thou perfect*” (Genesis 17:1). Of course we are not perfect and never can be in our own right. As Isaiah says, “*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6). But God is gracious and the covenant itself will provide our righteousness. And that leads us directly up to the next requirement of the covenant.

The second requirement of the covenant is that we exercise faith. We have to have faith in God, in his covenant promises, and in his Messiah. If we do that God will grant us the righteousness that we need to be his people. When Abraham was in his old age, seemingly sterile, and his wife barren, Moses records God addressing him as follows,

*“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness”* (Genesis 15:5-6).

And so taught all the New Testament writers.

*“For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness...Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that*

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*believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Romans 4:3,8-11).*

*“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:6).*

*“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23).*

Faith is an essential requirement of the covenant. As Paul later stated it,

*“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him” (Hebrews 10:38).*

*“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6).*

Finally, there are two more requirements of the covenant but as we shall see they are both related to the faith requirement. The first of these is circumcision. God told Abraham,

*“And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you...And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not*



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*circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant” (Genesis 17:9-11,14).*

What did circumcision mean? Well like any sacrament is was a physical symbol of a spiritual reality. And like every sacrament it represented God’s covenant mercies and blessings. Among other things it represented that great truth of the Abrahamic Covenant, justification by faith. As Paul stated it of Abraham, *“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also” (Romans 4:11).*

It also represented the cutting away of the body of sin, of that original sin that is transmitted from generation to generation. In short it represented regeneration. By our first birth we were born in sin and conceived in iniquity. Circumcision represented being born again as new creatures in Christ fit to fellowship with the Holy One of Israel. Because it represented regeneration it was performed on the male organ of generation. That it clearly had a deep spiritual meaning relating to the renewal of the heart by God’s Spirit is apparent from such texts as

*“The LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6).*

Now while the natural man receives not the word of God and the carnal heart is enmity towards God, this circumcised heart is renewed to love God. Similar references to the spiritual significance of circumcision can be found in Deuteronomy 10:6, Jeremiah 4:4, and Jeremiah 9:25-26. Christ arguing with the Jews about his healing on the Sabbath stated, *“If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should*

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*not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?"* (John 7:23). To Christ circumcision represented being made whole, another apt description of regeneration.

Being a bloody sacrament (Exodus 4:25-26) circumcision also stood for salvation by blood sacrifice. This truth was graphically portrayed to Abraham when he was on Mount Moriah and God provided a ram as a substitutionary blood sacrifice in place of the bound Isaac. And being on the male organ of generation it also spoke of the promised seed through whom that salvation would come. It represented hope in the promised seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head and the promised seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. The justifying faith of the Abrahamic Covenant was faith in the coming Messiah, the promised seed. And again by being a bloody sacrament it taught that by the shedding of the blood of the promised seed all the blessings of the covenant would be purchased. Those who truly understood the sacrament and received it in faith, had faith in the shed blood of a coming Messiah as the foundation of their hope for salvation.

Finally we see that like baptism, the sacrament of the New Covenant that replaced it, there was a faith requirement for circumcision. The scriptures teach a faith requirement for circumcision that is clearly manifested in the history of Israel. Moses taught that circumcision was necessary before partaking of the Passover (Exodus 12:44,48). At the exodus they were all circumcised (Joshua 5:5) and partook of the first Passover. Then although the Passover was commanded as an annual ordinance there was no observance of the Passover for forty years. They could not observe it because they were uncircumcised (Joshua 5:5). They were not circumcised because of their unbelief (Hebrews 3:16-19, Joshua 5:6). The generation that apostatized at Kadesh Barnea shortly after the first Passover died in the wilderness in unbelief. The succeeding generation renewed the covenant in faith on the plains of Moab (Deuteronomy 29) and

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entered into the land of promise. And there, the faith requirement having been again met, they are circumcised under Joshua's leadership (Joshua 5:2-3) and then subsequently celebrate the second Passover in human history (Joshua 5:10). It is significant to note that the children born in the wilderness could not be circumcised because their parents had fallen from grace and lacked the faith to enter the land of promise. Circumcision like baptism is tied to faith in Christ. Therefore the requirement of circumcision by the Abrahamic Covenant was indelibly connected with the faith requirement of the same covenant.

And last of all there is the requirement to practice blood sacrifice. There is no specific command but by example Abraham and all the patriarchs show that this was a requirement. But this again is obviously connected to the faith requirement of the covenant. The sacrifice has to be offered in faith. The sacrifice expresses faith. It shows the worshiper's faith in the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It shows the worshiper's faith in the substitute that God will provide. It shows the worshiper's faith in the shed blood of the coming Messiah. Without faith this sacrament, like the sacrament of circumcision, would be a mockery, a hollow shell, an exercise in superstition.

These are the requirements of the covenant. These are the requirements that every true son of Abraham is still under today. Today we observe the sacrament of baptism in place of the sacrament of circumcision. This is because the symbolism has of necessity changed. The promised seed has come; the blood has been shed, so the symbolism of circumcision has given way to the symbolism of baptism. The bloody sacrifices of the Old Testament have given way to the observance of the Lord's Supper where in faith we celebrate the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. These are still the requirements and by the grace of the covenant, by God's grace, they can all be met by the true seed of Abraham.

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### The Purpose:

All of God's covenants together form one united whole. They do not represent isolated actions neither are they spontaneous outpourings of divine grace. They are all integral parts of his eternal plan appearing in time as God unfolds his great plan of salvation. Together they form the history of redemption as God works out the salvation of his elect. The Abrahamic Covenant is therefore closely connected to and a logical development of all that has gone before.

First of all, as all of God's actions in time, this covenant represents steps taken towards the fulfilling of the Trinitarian Covenant. And since all the covenants are established for that purpose and to that same end, the Abrahamic Covenant therefore logically builds on all that has gone before. It builds on the Edenic promise of the seed of the woman that will someday prevail over Satan and deliver mankind from the curse. It shows that God has not forgotten his word to our first parents. And in the Abrahamic Covenant God renews this commitment and shows us that this promised seed will come from Abraham. It is through Abraham's seed that all the families of the earth will be blessed. It is from Abraham's descendants that the promised Messiah will someday come. Secondly this covenant represents a logical development of the Noahic Covenant. That covenant by graciously restraining God's righteous wrath against and just judgments on sin purchased the time for the history of redemption to unfold. The Abrahamic Covenant now follows in time to further reveal and implement God's great plan of salvation. It therefore logically begins to fulfill the purpose of the covenant made with Noah.

But especially in many of its promises the Abrahamic Covenant reveals new aspects of God's purposes in the Trinitarian Covenant. That covenant had as its ultimate purpose the establishment of the eternal Kingdom of God under the Messianic King, Jesus Christ. Now a kingdom requires three

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things. First of all it requires a citizenry. There must be a people who form the kingdom, a people over whom the king will rule. Secondly there must be a territory that forms the kingdom. There must be a land over which the king will rule. And thirdly there must be a king. Without a king there can be no kingdom. Now for the first time in history, in this covenant, God reveals all these three elements of his future glorious kingdom.

First of all God reveals that there will be a people and he reveals who this people will be. God covenants that there will be a people of God and that they will be the seed of Abraham. To the seed of Abraham God says that he will be their God and they will be his people. Here we have, for the first time, identified the people of the kingdom. And God reveals that this will be a great, a numerous people. God covenants that the seed of Abraham will be an innumerable multitude similar to the stars of the heavens and to the sand of the seashore in number. And God also covenants that this will be a holy and a righteous people fit to inhabit that kingdom. For this is a covenant based on justification by faith. The seed of Abraham will be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and will be fully justified in the sight of a holy God. And the seed of Abraham will be a sanctified and a holy people. This is set forth the token of the covenant, circumcision, which represents being born again. The people of the kingdom will be regenerated by the Spirit of God; they will be new creatures in Christ; they will be fit to dwell in the Kingdom of God and commune with him for all eternity. Here in the Abrahamic Covenant we have the first glimpse of what John was allowed to see in the visions of the Book of Revelation. He was allowed to see the fulfillment of God's purpose with the seed of Abraham. The vision as he recorded it states,

*“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed*

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*with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9-10).*

John was enabled to glimpse into the future glory of the Kingdom of God and see the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant.

*“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:2-4).*

Here is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and to his seed that God will be their God and they will be his people.

Secondly God reveals his will with respect to the territory that will form the kingdom. There is a specific land that is promised to Abraham and to his seed for an everlasting possession. The land of promise is identified as the land of Canaan. Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees and had to leave his relatives in Haran because God wanted his presence in the land of promise. Isaac was forbidden to leave the land even to obtain a godly wife. When Jacob left it in a time of famine, and his descendants remained in Egypt after the famine was over, it resulted in centuries of slavery and nearly in the extermination of the Israelites. Joseph dying in Egypt, gave commands that his mummified body should be transported to the land of Canaan for burial when the Children of Israel returned there. And it was in that land that they were established in the Old Testament theocracy when God dwelled with them and ruled them from the mercy seat of the Ark of the

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Covenant in the Holy of Holies. And Jerusalem, the capital city of the theocracy, is called the City of the Lord. How all this relates to the “*New Jerusalem*” and to that “*new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness*” is not the subject of this book. But that it does so is clear from the text of the Abrahamic Covenant. For this covenant is an everlasting covenant and the promise of the land is one of everlasting possession.

And finally as we have already seen the covenant provides for a Messianic King to come forth someday from the seed of Abraham. As God told Abraham, “...*kings shall come out of thee.*” (Genesis 17:6). And as Paul later explained it, “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ*” (Galatians 3:16). There is, as it were, a double meaning to the word seed in “*the seed of Abraham*”. One is the obvious meaning. It means the elect of God; the people that have come into the covenant promises made to Abraham. It means a multitude as numerous as the stars in the heavens and the sand on the seashore. But there is another meaning also. Paul argues from the singularity of the noun that it has an extra meaning; that it refers to a special seed of Abraham, to Jesus Christ. Thus the covenant clearly provides for the future Messianic King. The covenant therefore provides for all three essential ingredients of the covenanted kingdom. It provides for the people, the land, and the king. It is all here in this covenant as God begins to fulfil the purposes of the Trinitarian Covenant. Hallelujah!

### **The Grace:**

What is there left to say? The grace of this covenant is so obvious, its magnitude and extent so overwhelming, that we can only feel humble and pour out our thanks to God for his great salvation. The Noahic Covenant provided the grace that made history possible. The Abrahamic Covenant provided the grace that fulfills God’s purposes in history. Through the benefits of

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this covenant, particularly through the promised seed, Jesus Christ, all the families of the earth are still being blessed. They are being blessed with the salvation of our God. They are being blessed with justification before God, with the sanctification and indwelling of his Holy Spirit, and with the gift of eternal life in that covenanted kingdom. And all this is by sheer grace. All these promises are strictly by grace on God's part. God was under no obligation to so deal with his sinful creatures. As Paul, teaching that it was strictly by grace and not by works, says,

*“What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”* (Romans 4:1-5).

Even the faith that the covenant requires is the gift of God.

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

It is all of grace. Surely this is a gracious covenant. Hallelujah!



CHAPTER 5

THE SINAITIC COVENANT

**The Covenant:**

Although this is another divine covenant made with the seed of Abraham it is definitely distinct from the Covenant that was made with Abraham. As Moses states it to the Children of Israel,

*“The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day”* (Deuteronomy 5:2-3).

In fact they are frequently compared and set in apposition to each other by the New Testament writers. For instance Paul instructs the Galatian Christians,

*“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect”* (Galatians 3:16-17).

In Pauline terminology *“the promise”* is a synonym for the Abrahamic Covenant even as *“the law”* is a synonym for the Sinaitic Covenant. What Paul is saying is that the Abrahamic Covenant is not disannulled by the coming of the Sinaitic Covenant over four centuries later. Paul is telling the Galatian Christians that by being united to Christ by faith they are heirs of *“the promise”*, of the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul’s position was always clear. They were under the Abrahamic Covenant, but not under the Sinaitic, they were under *“the promise”* but

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they were not under “*the law*”! And from all this it is obvious that these are distinct covenants and to confuse them can lead to all kinds of serious errors.

This confusion can be engendered by the fact that they are made with similar parties. The Abrahamic Covenant was made with Abraham and his seed and the Sinaitic Covenant was made with the seed of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob. That is, it was made with the children of Israel. It differed from the Abrahamic not only in the specifics of whom the parties were but also in its requirements. Whereas the Abrahamic Covenant had stressed faith the Sinaitic stressed obedience. Repeatedly it stated,

*“Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers”* (Deuteronomy 7:12).

*“Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do”* (Deuteronomy 29:9).

### **Renewed from time to time:**

This covenant was originally made with the children of Israel at Sinai shortly after the Exodus as recorded in the book of that name.

*“And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words”* (Exodus 24:7-8).

This covenant was then renewed from time to time but always with the same parties, always between God and the

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Children of Israel. The first generation that was under this covenant broke it by their disobedience at Kadesh-Barnea and was condemned to forty years of wandering in the wilderness. The blessings of the covenant, including possession of the land of promise, of a land flowing with milk and honey, were predicated upon obedience to the terms of the covenant. After that generation had died out the covenant was renewed on the plains of Moab with the next generation. This is recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, the second giving of the “law”, that is the second giving of the covenant.

*“And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to show you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;)...”* (Deuteronomy 5:1-5).

*“These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.”* (Deuteronomy 29:1).

*“Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day”* (Deuteronomy 29:10-12).

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It was renewed again in the days of Joshua and from time to time as the Children of Israel repented of their idolatries and returned to their God right up until the days of Josiah.

*“And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem” (Joshua 24:21-25).*

*“And the king (Josiah) sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant” (2 Kings 23:1-3).*

### **The Sinaitic was the only Breakable Covenant:**

This is the only of the divine covenants that was conditional and therefore breakable in the sense that it could be rendered null and void by the disobedience of the human party. That this would occur was prophesied by God himself through his servant Moses.

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*“For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant”* (Deuteronomy 31:20).

The children of Israel themselves realized that the covenant was conditional and its faithful fulfillment was predicated upon their obedience to its terms. This is clearly acknowledged in the prayer of the prophet Jeremiah.

*“We acknowledge, O LORD, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against thee. Do not abhor us, for thy name’s sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us. Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art not thou he, O LORD our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things. Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth”* (Jeremiah 14:20-15:1).

### **The Parties to the Covenant:**

The covenant was made with the nation of Israel. It was made with the people called the Children of Israel. It was made with all the people. This is evident from the initial making of the covenant at Mount Sinai and from its renewal on the plains of Moab.

*“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the*

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*hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words” (Exodus 24:3-8).*

*“Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day” “ (Deuteronomy 29:10-12).*

Every Israelite was involved in the covenant. Every Israelite was under this covenant. Every Israelite was required to keep the terms of this covenant. And every Israelite was subject to the sanctions of this covenant if he should break it. However strangers and foreigners sojourning in the land were not under it. The law was different for them. It was different because they were not in the covenant. The laws of the covenant forbade usury to a brother, to a fellow Israelite, but it allowed usury to a stranger (Deuteronomy 23:20). The law placed all Israelites under the dietary laws of Moses, but it exempted the stranger and the foreigner (Deuteronomy 14:21). The law required all males to appear before the Lord three times a year in Jerusalem to worship him at the annual feasts, but the law forbade the stranger and the foreigner from entering the courts of the tabernacle\temple past the middle wall of partition. And this restriction was enforced by the death penalty

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(Numbers 3:10,38). The law required the observance of the Passover but denied this sacrament to the foreigner and the stranger (Exodus 12). For all these reasons and many others, it is clear that the law was different for the stranger and the sojourner in the land. It was different because they were not included in the covenant.

There are some passages in the law that state that there “*shall be one manner of law*” both for the stranger and the Israelite. On the surface this might seem to place every stranger and sojourner directly under all the implications of keeping all the laws of the Sinaitic Covenant or suffering the civil consequences. However these statements can be clearly divided into two categories. One category is where the context is clearly addressing the enforcement of second table offenses (Leviticus 18:16-30; Leviticus 24:17-22). The other category is clearly speaking of strangers who have become religious proselytes (Numbers 9:14; Numbers 15:14-16; Numbers 15:26-30). This then clearly allows for a distinction in the jurisdiction that the civil magistrates of Israel had over Israelites that were within the covenant and the jurisdiction that they had over strangers and sojourners. Over the latter they had only jurisdiction with respect to the second table of the law. They clearly were not under any legal obligation to publicly worship God according to the requirements of the Sinaitic Covenant and in fact were specifically forbidden to so. It would have been a great contradiction to have compelled them to do so. They were in fact allowed to worship as they pleased in private as long as they kept the second table (i.e no human sacrifice etc.). What they were not allowed to do was commit public acts of blasphemy, witchcraft, and idolatry (Leviticus 24:16). In a theocracy, as Israel then was, this is quite understandable. Jahweh was King of Israel, and so to blaspheme him was akin to treason and therefore punishable as a political offense. Ultimately only Israelites and those proselytes who voluntarily professed faith in the God of Israel and became members of the Jewish Church were under the Sinaitic Covenant and subject to

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its terms and requirements. It is with these, and with these only, that God made the Covenant at Sinai. These, and of course God himself, are the only parties to this covenant.

### The Promises and Blessings of the Covenant:

The blessings of the Sinaitic Covenant were a prototype of the blessings of the Kingdom of God. The great blessing of the covenant was that God would be their God and they would be his people. This was the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant that said, *“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God”* (Genesis 17:7-8).

Moses records the fulfillment of this promise for the Children of Israel under this covenant.

*“And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people”* (Leviticus 26:11-12).

*“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and*



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*mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations” (Deuteronomy 7:6-9).*

All the other blessings of the covenant were also reminiscent of the expected and hoped for blessings of the messianic kingdom foretold by the prophets. If they were all fulfilled it would have virtually made Israel the kingdom of God. After the fall God had told Adam,

*“...Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:17-19).*

By contrast to all this, God gave Israel an incredibly fertile land, a land flowing with milk and honey. It was a land so fertile that it took two men to carry a bunch of grapes (Numbers 13:23). It was as if God would lift the curse of sin, reverse the consequences of the fall, and establish Israel in a kind of paradise. They were promised deliverance from their enemies. They were promised deliverance from disease. They were promised deliverance from drought and famine and locusts and all manner of natural disasters. They were promised exceptional fertility among their flocks. They were promised fruitful wives and abundant children. The cornucopia of blessings seems almost too endless to list.

Not only were the blessings of this covenant reminiscent of the blessings of the kingdom of God but the nation itself, under this covenant, was in a sense the kingdom of God because God himself was their king. Israel was a theocracy. Israel was ruled directly by God. All nations are under God’s rule. All nations are governed by God as the Ruler of the Universe and the Judge

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of all the earth. All nations are ruled by God through his gracious providence and just judgments. But Israel was different. God was their king. He directly ruled over them. He personally gave them all his laws. He ruled then from the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, his throne room. Through his prophets and through the High Priests by the Urim and Thummin he gave them his decrees and decisions. No other nation has ever been so ruled. No other nation has ever been so blessed.

The fact that Israel did not obtain these blessings does not mean that the covenant did not offer them. If Israel did not become the kind of earthly paradise that the covenant promised it was because of her sin. Time and time again instead of being a blessed nation abounding in God's goodness she was wracked by divine judgments on her idolatry and apostasy. The covenant promised much but as Paul said, "*it was weak through the flesh*" and the results were a continuing chronicle of woe and disaster due to sin. These covenant blessings still await their fulfillment, their fulfillment through another covenant, the New Covenant. They await a still future fulfillment at the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ, the "*Blessed Hope*" of the church.

### The Requirements of the Covenant:

The basic, fundamental requirement of the Sinaitic Covenant was faithful obedience to the terms of the covenant. It required obedience to all the laws, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, and all the judgments that the Lord gave them. Everything was conditional upon their faithful obedience as a host of scriptures relentlessly reiterated to them.

*"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words*

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*which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:5-6)*

*“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you” (Deuteronomy 4:1).*

*“And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it” (Deuteronomy 4:13-14).*

*“Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee” (Deuteronomy 7:12-15).*

*“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Hear ye the words of this covenant, and speak unto the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; And say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Cursed be the man that obeyeth not the words of this covenant, Which I commanded your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, Obey my voice, and do*

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*them, according to all which I command you: so shall ye be my people, and I will be your God: That I may perform the oath which I have sworn unto your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day. Then answered I, and said, So be it, O LORD”* (Jeremiah 11:1-5).

The people understood this requirement and covenanted to fulfil it.

*“And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do...And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words”* (Exodus 24:3,7-8).

There was another key requirement of the covenant, and that was repentance. God neither expected nor demanded perfection as he had in the covenant of works. The covenant did not expect the people to be sinless and achieve spiritual perfection in this life. God knew only too well that the people he had called to himself were a stiff-necked and rebellious lot, born in sin and conceived in iniquity. Rather the covenant provided for ways to deal with the people’s sins, for ways to atone for their transgressions of his law. If they had done something to become ceremonially unclean there was a way to be ceremonially cleansed again. If they had sinned in transgressing God’s law there was an atonement that could be made. By ritual and by sacrifices the penitent sinner could be restored to fellowship with God. And that was the key, the sinner had to be penitent, and had to confess his iniquity and seek God’s forgiveness. In short the sinner had to repent. As Moses instructed them,

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*“If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; And that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land”* (Leviticus 26:40-42).

*“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”* 2 Chronicles 7:14).

As the above texts demonstrate this repentance was not only personal but also at times national depending on the nature of the sin. On a national level the cycle of sin, judgment, repentance, and restoration was an ongoing saga from the days of the judges through the final rejection of the Messiah by the nation.

### **The Sanctions of the Covenant:**

The covenant was a two edged sword. Failure to keep the covenant entailed much more than the loss of the proffered blessings. Failure to keep the covenant placed the covenant breaker under the sanctions of the covenant. Failure to keep the covenant brought one under the curses and judgments spelled out in the covenant for those who transgressed its commandments. These curses were spelled out with frightful detail in the covenant itself to provide a clear warning and a legal deterrent to those who would take the covenant lightly. Moses, as God’s spokesman and the mediator of this covenant,

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repeatedly instructed them in the consequences of their disobedience.

*“But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you”* (Leviticus 26:14-17).

The most extensive catalog of the blessings and the sanctions of the covenant are listed in Deuteronomy 28. The blessings are listed in verses 1 through 14, part of which reads as follows,

*“And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto;*

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*and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways”* (Deuteronomy 28:1-9).

A sampling of the curses listed there from verses 15 through 68 is as follows,

*“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it”* (Deuteronomy 28:15-21).

The good news brought by this covenant, and the conditional offer of the covenantal blessings, were like the gospel today, a two-edged sword. As Paul put it,

*“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?”* (2 Corinthians 2:15-16).

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Coming under the preaching of the gospel never leaves men the same as they were before. Either they respond in faith and obedience to the word of God or they harden themselves against it. Either they advance in grace as they are sanctified by God's word and Spirit or they progress in apostasy and rebellion. They are either storing up treasure in heaven or piling up judgments in the eternal state. There is no middle ground. As Christ warned the cities of Galilee where he had so extensively ministered,

*“Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not: Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee” (Matthew 11:20-24).*

It is better to have never heard the gospel than to face the final judgment as one who has scorned and spurned it. And so it was under the Sinaitic Covenant. It was far better never to have been under that blessed covenant than having been in that privileged position to have trampled its provisions underfoot. Covenant blessings bring covenant responsibilities. Judgment indeed starts with the house of God.

### **The Purposes of the Covenant:**

The purposes of the Sinaitic Covenant are harder to clearly define than those of the other covenants. This is because it is the only covenant that was abrogated and set aside. Therefore



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since its stated purposes were not fulfilled due to its failure, God must have had other purposes in this covenant, purposes that were fulfilled. We will search these out in the scriptures and identify them. But first we need to examine the stated purposes of this covenant.

All of God's covenants flow in a logical progression. They all build on the previous covenants and further their purposes. The first covenant was the Trinitarian Covenant and out of that came the Abrahamic Covenant. Thus it is to further the purposes of especially these two covenants that the Sinaitic Covenant was established. The Trinitarian Covenant was made to bring to pass the everlasting, theocratic kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A kingdom requires at least three things, a land, a people, and a king. All three were identified in the Abrahamic Covenant. The land of Canaan, the land of promise, was covenanted to Abraham as an everlasting possession. However the scriptures make clear that Abraham never inherited the land himself. Stephen states this in his address to the Sanhedrin.

*“And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child” (Acts 7:2-5).*

And Paul reaffirms this as well.

*“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and*

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*he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God...These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:8-10,13).*

The purpose of God with respect to the land as set forth in the Abrahamic Covenant but never realized in Abraham’s day is now brought to fruition in the Sinaitic Covenant. Under this covenant the land is conditionally given to Israel as a perpetual inheritance on the basis of faithful national obedience to the terms of the covenant. The promise concerning the people of the kingdom is furthered in a similar way. God had promised that he would be a God to Abraham and his seed after him. Abraham’s seed would be the people of God, the people of the kingdom. And God had promised that Abraham’s seed would be as numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore (Genesis 22:17). Again these promises were not fulfilled in Abraham’s day and after the excommunication of Ishmael, and the sending away of the sons of Keturah, Abraham’s covenant seed was only one person, his son Isaac. But centuries later under the Sinaitic Covenant the Children of Israel become exceedingly numerous (1 Kings 4:20) and are established in the land as the people of God. But their status as God’s people is conditional and again based on their faithful obedience to the covenant. If not God will fulfil his purposes another way. If they are faithless he will still be faithful to his covenant with Abraham. He will raise up another seed to Abraham and fulfil his eternal purposes through them. This is repeatedly mentioned in scripture especially when the Children of Israel forsook the covenant as noted in the following scriptures.

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*“And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have showed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they”* (Numbers 14:11-12).

*“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire”* (Matthew 3:7-10)

The Apostle Paul records the ultimate fulfillment of these threats as God raised up another seed of Abraham after cutting off the unbelieving branches by grafting the believing Gentiles into the olive tree, into the true Israel of God (Romans 11:17-24; Galatians 3:6-9,29).

And finally the Abrahamic Covenant provided the promise of future kings. However again we note that this promise was not fulfilled in Abraham’s lifetime. Isaac and Jacob were sojourners in the land of promise and the children of Israel spent centuries in Egypt as slaves of Pharaoh. Again it is under the Sinaitic Covenant that we begin to see this stipulation come to fulfillment. The Covenant itself provided for the institution of kingship.

*“When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee,*

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*whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother...it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel” (Deuteronomy 17:14-15,18-20).*

Under this provision the nation of Israel changed from a republic ruled by elected judges to an elective monarchy in the days of Samuel. In either case as noted above God chose the ruler and the nation ratified God’s choice by electing that individual. God’s choice was made known by his prophets anointing the man of God’s choosing to the office. Under these provisions Israel had many kings. Some of these kings, like David and Solomon, were great kings and were types of Christ, who would be the great King who would reign over God’s people forevermore in the glorious, eternal kingdom of God.

Thus on a provisional and conditional basis we see many of the essential purposes of the Trinitarian Covenant and many of the key promises of the Abrahamic Covenant come to a partial fulfillment through the Sinaitic Covenant. As Moses repeatedly stated, the deliverance of the Children of Israel and their establishment in the land of promise was a direct result of God implementing in time the promises made to Abraham centuries earlier.

*“And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the*

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*bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them” (Exodus 2:23-25).*

*“And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered my covenant. Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments: And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians” (Exodus 6:5-7).*

Ultimately however this covenant failed to permanently bring in the blessed hopes of the Abrahamic Covenant. It failed to truly establish the purposes of the Trinitarian Covenant. It failed because of sin. It failed because Israel could not keep the covenant and obtain the covenantal blessings on a permanent basis. Ultimately both the Northern and the Southern Kingdom went into captivity as a punishment for their idolatry, apostasy, and covenant breaking. And the remnant that by God’s grace returned from the Babylonian captivity went on to reject their Messiah crying, “...Away with him, away with him, crucify him” (John 19:15). The nation’s doom was then sealed as it went on to the national holocaust of 70 AD.

Although these covenant purposes were not successfully fulfilled through the Sinaitic Covenant that does not mean that God failed or that his plan received a setback. As James said, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). God’s covenant purposes will be fulfilled in his own good time. In the meantime God had other purposes in the establishment of and in the ultimate failure of the Sinaitic

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Covenant. We will now examine these purposes, the purposes that were fulfilled through this covenant. To do this we need to examine the scriptures for unless God graciously reveals it to us, we cannot know his secret will or his hidden purposes.

One of the chief purposes of the Sinaitic Covenant was to give us the scriptures. As Paul stated it to the Roman Christians when he answered the rhetorical question, "*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God*" (Romans 3:1-2). One of the greatest blessings of and one of the greatest accomplishments of the Sinaitic Covenant was to provide the people of God with a written record of his word. There were no scriptures before the advent of this covenant. The first five books of the scriptures were authored by the Moses, the mediator of this covenant. The historical books of the Old Testament scriptures were authored by the scribes of the nation established by this covenant, and most of the other books were authored by the prophets God raised up as part of the national church established by this covenant. Several books were authored by the kings that God raised up to rule over the nation founded by this covenant. Without the Sinaitic Covenant it is clear there would have been no Old Testament scriptures. And even the New Testament scriptures were almost exclusively authored by men, the Apostles of Jesus Christ or those who wrote under their imprimatur, who were men of the Jewish nation and raised up under the Sinaitic Covenant. This purpose of God was certainly gloriously fulfilled by means of this covenant.

Secondly this covenant was designed to prepare the world for the advent of Jesus Christ. Again as Paul states it. "*Wherefore the law (i.e. the Sinaitic Covenant) was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*" (Galatians 3:24). Everything in the Sinaitic economy pointed to Christ. All the ritual sacrifices pointed to and typified the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ for his people. The sacrament of circumcision pointing to the

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promised seed, and of the Passover typifying Christ who is our Passover lamb, all directed the Old Testament believer to faith in Jesus Christ. The High Priests typified Christ our High Priest who would enter the true Holy of Holies, the heavens, with the blood of the true sacrifice, to make an effectual atonement for sin. The greatest kings of Israel were types of Christ, the theocratic king, who will sit on the throne of his father David forever. Both David as the great warrior king subduing all of God's enemies and Solomon as the great and wise king, the peaceful ruler and prosperous monarch, typified aspects of the eternal reign of Jesus Christ over his people in the kingdom of God. Centuries of the messianic teachings of and the messianic hopes of the Sinaitic Covenant all contributed towards preparing the Jews and indeed the world for the advent of Jesus Christ. So much so, that when Christ did appear the question never was would there be an eternal messianic king who would be both God and man. The question merely became, was Jesus of Nazareth the long awaited Messiah? All that was needed to establish the Christian faith on that foundation was the Apostle's Peter's great confession at Caesarea-Philippi, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). All those who faithfully awaited his coming and all those who received him were prepared of God through the instrumentality of the Sinaitic Covenant and the nation and the church that it established. Disappointing as the nation's official rejection of their messiah by the Sanhedrin was, yet the thousands who did acknowledge him as the Messiah, the Lord's Christ, went on to make the Christian faith the dominant faith of the Western world. All this was made possible by the outworkings of the Sinaitic Covenant. In all this God's great purpose of calling out his elect as the people of the future kingdom of God was tremendously furthered. And so this covenant has contributed mightily towards the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption.

Thirdly one of the great purposes of the Sinaitic Covenant was to show man that he cannot save himself. It was to clearly teach that truly, "*Salvation is of the Lord*". It was to show man

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the necessity of God's sovereignty in salvation. It was to teach man that salvation is all of grace, one hundred per cent grace, and if it is dependant on even one iota of human effort it will fail. The weakness of the Sinaitic Covenant was all man's weakness and not God's. Again as Paul put it,

*“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Romans 8:3-4).

Is it not remarkable that the only divine covenant concerned with the plan of redemption after the fall, that was dependant on human faithfulness, is also the only divine covenant that failed to accomplish all its stated purposes and was replaced by a better covenant. This is the only covenant that was conditional and the conditions were not met due to man's sinfulness. There is a great lesson here. And the lesson is that the arm of flesh will fail us. The lesson is that salvation is all of grace, that it is the work of God and not the work of man. It teaches us that man is not the co-author of his salvation, or the determiner of his own eternal fate, but that he is merely the humble recipient of divine mercy who can contribute nothing to this great cause except his eternal thanks and praise. Teaching us the hopelessness of a Pharisaical righteousness of our own, a righteousness not of faith but of works, is one of the key legacies of this covenant.

And finally one of the purposes of this covenant was to provide an additional restraint on sin. Again as the Apostle Paul explained it.

*“Wherefore then serveth the law (i.e. the Sinaitic Covenant)? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made”* (Galatians 3:19).



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We have already explained the purpose of the Noahic Covenant to provide a restraint on sin. This would obviate the need for any further universal divine judgments on sin and provide the time for God to work out the implementation of the plan of salvation in time. A similar purpose was performed by the Sinaitic Covenant. Even as the Noahic Covenant provided time for all men so this covenant would provide time for the "*seed of Abraham*". It was added because of transgressions. That is, it was instituted to deal with the problem of "transgressions", to restrain the abundance of transgressions that sinful human nature can be expected to produce. It was designed to restrain the sins of the children of Israel so that God would not wipe them out for their sins before his purposes in this covenant were fulfilled and the promised seed, Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah had come. Everything in the Mosaic economy was designed to point out the problems of sin even as it all pointed to Christ. The requirements of this covenant were designed to separate the Children of Israel from the surrounding nations and to inhibit their absorbing the idolatries and immoral practices of those cultures. The prohibitions on intermarriage and the dietary laws all worked towards that end. After all how much social intercourse can one have with people that one cannot even eat with due to strict dietary requirements. The onerous yoke of all the ritual sacrifices and the requirements to remain ceremonially clean all raised the social and economic price of sin. Both the social and economic penalties of sin were strong deterrents in such a society. The threats and sanctions of the covenant provided even more deterrent. The Jews, it appears, did adequately learn the lesson that idolatry doesn't pay after a host of divine national judgments culminating in a foreign captivity. By Christ's time they may have been hypocrites but their aversion to idolatry was clearly established. All this was the result of and the fulfillment of this particular purpose of the Sinaitic Covenant. There may be more purposes that I have overlooked or that God has not chosen to reveal to us. However the above are more than sufficient to establish that

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God had numerous significant purposes in establishing this covenant that were fulfilled.

### **The Breaking of the Covenant:**

We have already noted the conditional nature of this covenant. Of all the divine covenants this is the only one whose promises were conditional. Of all the divine covenants this is the only one that could be broken and rendered null and void by the failure of the human party to live up to the terms and requirements of the covenant. Now we will see that this was not merely an abstract possibility but that this covenant was actually broken, abrogated, and set aside. The most obvious proof of this is that the nation it established, and the system of ritual worship it brought into being, has passed away. The nation was destroyed, its people were scattered all across the known world, and the temple, the heart of its system of worship, was demolished. And one thing we can say about the modern State of Israel, established in 1948, is that it is not a reincarnation of the Old Testament Hebrew Commonwealth. The nation does not have the Sinaitic Covenant as its constitution and there is no temple. It is a secular state with only a minority of its people being orthodox Jews who actually seek to uphold the Torah. The death of the nation and indeed of the whole ceremonial economy associated with the Sinaitic Covenant, by God's providential judgments in 70 AD, is probably the strongest argument that this covenant has been irretrievably broken. However there are a number of other arguments, theological in nature, that are equally compelling.

The first one of these is a prophecy by Jeremiah. He prophesied that God would make another covenant with the House of Israel and the House of Judah. Logically the making of a new covenant between the same parties implies the passing away of the old one.

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*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:31-33).*

Jeremiah alludes to the fact that Israel has broken the Sinaitic Covenant and prophesies that God will replace it with a newer and more effectual covenant. While the former covenant had the law inscribed for Israel in tables of stone to be archived in the Ark of the Covenant, the latter covenant will write the law of God in the fleshly tables of the heart. While in the former God promised to be their God and make them his people upon condition of national obedience to his commandments in the latter God unilaterally promises that he *“will be their God, and they shall be my people”*. The conditionality has been removed. We will study this in greater depth when we come to our examination of the New Covenant. Right now all we need to note is that the coming of this “New Covenant” signals the disappearance of the “Old Covenant”. This is certainly how Paul, the probable author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, interpreted it. He said,

*“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I*

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*took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:6-13).*

And in Paul’s day it was ready to vanish away. At the Last Supper Christ had replaced the Sinaitic sacrament of the Passover with the Lord’s Supper, a sacrament of the New Covenant. Taking the cup, he had said, “...*Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament (i.e. covenant), which is shed for many for the remission of sins”* (Matthew 26:27-28). The Old Covenant was being phased out. The Gentile believers would never come under it and the Jews themselves were going through a transition phase to prepare them for its abrogation. In 70 AD it all came to a close.

A second argument is Paul’s covenant allegory in his letter to the Churches of Galatia.

*“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in*

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*bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free” (Galatians 4:21-31).*

Paul has just argued in the previous chapter that the Christians, those who believe in Jesus of Nazareth, those who have the faith of Abraham, are the seed of Abraham and the true people of God. He had argued that they are saved by faith through the terms of the Abrahamic Covenant and not by the works of the law, the terms of the Sinaitic Covenant. He then goes on to counter the argument, “Why was the Sinaitic Covenant ever instituted at all then?” Paul answers this hypothetical objection and his argument parallels what we have said about the Noahic Covenant. Paul says,

*“Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator” Galatians 3:19*

Just as the Noahic Covenant was instituted to restrain sin and the further necessity of universal judgments against it by a holy God, so the Sinaitic Covenant was instituted to restrain sin until the “promised seed”, the Messiah, should come. Paul’s inference is clear. Once Christ, the Messiah, has come the

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Sinaitic Covenant is no longer necessary and is ready to vanish away.

But let us return to the covenant allegory of Hebrews 4. As previously noted, we have to understand that in Pauline terminology “*the law*” is a synonym for the Sinaitic Covenant as “*the promise*” is a synonym for the Abrahamic Covenant. Paul is clearly setting forth the undesirability of this covenant when compared with the Abrahamic. This is hardly the language of an inspired teacher who believes in the continuing validity and applicability of the Old Covenant. These are the sentiments of a man who is convinced that the Old Covenant was merely a temporary expedient, representing in Peter’s words, “...*a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*” (Acts 15:10). These are the words of a man who believes that this covenant has passed away and has been replaced with something far more glorious.

And finally, the most compelling argument of all, the direct argument from scripture that explicitly states that this covenant was broken. The prophet Zechariah predicted that the Sinaitic Covenant would be broken, stating,

*“And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel”* (Zechariah 11:10-14).

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This is a remarkable prophecy. It is rich in details concerning the rejection of Jesus Christ by the nation and his betrayal and death. However what we really need to focus on is what all this means for the Sinaitic Covenant. Zechariah is teaching us that in the day that Israel sold its Shepherd for thirty pieces of silver, that on that very day, God himself would break his covenant with Israel. The rejection of their Messiah was the ultimate in the national disobedience of Israel. The covenant could not survive such a transgression. God himself irrevocably annulled the covenant on that day. The Sinaitic Covenant is no more.

### **The Grace of the Covenant:**

Like all of God's covenants with man this is a gracious covenant. However, because of its emphasis on law, this has been contested by some theologians. Particularly dispensationalists have been prone to condemn this covenant as an exercise in legalism. Scofield's view of this arrangement is that at Sinai the Children of Israel exchanged grace for law. This view is somewhat blasphemous. It insinuates that God must have "tricked" them into accepting this covenant and they bought a "pig in a poke". There were many blessings in this covenant and all of God's blessings on his sinful creatures are an exercise in grace.

One of the problems here is that dispensationalists see every divine administration as separate and distinct and as succeeding and replacing the prior arrangement. They do not think of this as the unfolding of one grand whole, as one eternal plan of salvation. They do not see the continuity. They do not think as covenant theologians. The Children of Israel gave up nothing at Sinai. They continued to be under the original Covenant of Works made with Adam in the Garden. They continued to have the Edenic promise of a coming Messiah. And most importantly they continued to be under the

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Abrahamic Covenant. As Paul stated it to the Galatian Christians,

*“Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect”* (Galatians 3:15-17).

Paul is saying that even human covenants once confirmed continue in force. And specifically that the Covenant with Abraham, made by God and confirmed in Christ, is not disannulled by the coming of the Sinaitic Covenant four hundred and thirty years later. The Children of Israel did not exchange anything at Sinai, they merely received additional gracious covenant benefits. Let us examine some of these.

Paul himself answers this question of the gracious benefits of the Sinaitic Covenant in his discussions on salvation with the Christian Church in Rome.

*“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God”* (Romans 3:1-2).

Paul says that that there were many benefits to being under the Sinaitic Covenant. And he states that the chief benefit was that the Jews were in possession of the inspired word of God. They had the scriptures. From Moses, the mediator of the Sinaitic Covenant, to the last of the prophets who ministered to the nation under this covenant, they had a constant stream of inspired utterances, a constant inspired stream of the word of God to them. And this did not come to any other nation or



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people. God does not cast his pearls before swine. This represented a continuous testimony of God's grace and mercy towards Israel and was one of the greatest blessings of the Sinaitic Covenant.

We have already noted that the covenant did not require perfect obedience. This itself is a marvelous proof of the gracious nature of this covenant. God, through the rituals of the ceremonial law, provided many ways to deal with sin, to cover sin, and to be reconciled to God in spite of one's sin. All of this was of course sheer grace. All an Israelite had to do was repent and submit to the ceremonial requirements as proof of his good faith. If he would do that, if he would confess his sin, God would be gracious and forgive all his sin. Unlike the covenant of works where there was no recourse once one had sinned, here through faith and repentance, and through offerings typical of the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ one could be restored to fellowship with God. Indeed this was a gracious covenant.

There were many more gracious blessings in this covenant according to the inspired Apostle. He lists a few of them in the following passage.

*“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Romans 9:3-5).*

Surely, this was a most gracious covenant!

### CHAPTER 6 THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

#### **Introduction:**

As previously noted the Trinitarian Covenant provided for the future establishment of an eternal kingdom. Such a kingdom has requirements that include a land, a people, and a king. We have seen that the Abrahamic Covenant contained promises with respect to all three and that the Sinaitic Covenant involved a temporary, conditional, partial, fulfillment of all three. In the Davidic Covenant we will see a further development of God's eternal purpose in providing an eternal king to rule forever over the people of God in a future glorious kingdom that will have no end.

#### **The Hebrew Kingship:**

Again as previously noted the Sinaitic Covenant provided for the institution of a monarchy. However originally the nation was ruled by Judges. It is important to realize the nature of these institutions if we are to understand the true nature of the Davidic Covenant. It is crucial to understand that the nation's chief executive, whether a judge or a king, was nominated by God and elected by the people, generally through their representatives, the civil elders. This was required by the nation's constitution, which said,

*“When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother” (Deuteronomy 17:14-15).*

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The people by their free choice and election made a person king but they were commanded to only elect the person of God's choosing. God was the true king of Israel and any earthly king was only his representative, his viceroy, his prime minister, and only God himself could make that choice. This was certainly the case with Moses. When he first sought to take the leadership of the Hebrew people they rejected him saying, "*Who made thee a prince and a judge over us?*" (Exodus 2:14). However after he was called of God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:10) and presented himself to the elders of Israel with his divine commission he was accepted (Exodus 4:29-31). A similar pattern was followed in the case of Joshua. God had directly called Moses at Mount Sinai at the burning bush because he was the first. After that however the choice of God was made manifest by the anointing of his prophet. Moses, as the great prophet of the Sinaitic Covenant, anointed Joshua to succeed him.

*"And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses"* (Deuteronomy 34:9).

God himself confirmed this commission,

*"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them"* (Joshua 1:5-6).

And when Joshua addressed the elders of Israel they responded accordingly.

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*“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,...And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go. According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage”* (Joshua 1:10, 16-18).

This pattern was continued when the change was made from a republic to a monarchy and is reflected in the accounts of the elevation of the first two kings of Israel to the throne. In 1 Samuel 8 the people had demanded a king and God had instructed Samuel to accede to their request. Samuel then anoints Saul per God’s instructions.

*“Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people...Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?”* (1 Samuel 9:15-17; 10:1).

The process was repeated again with David, the son of Jesse. Saul had been rejected of the Lord because of his disobedience. The Lord then sends Samuel to anoint David to be king.

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*“And the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons...Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The LORD hath not chosen these. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah” (1 Samuel 16:1,10-13).*

Now it is important to note that this anointing did not make David the king. It was many years before he would be king over Judah and seven more before he would be king over all Israel. Although David had become the anointed of the Lord and Saul had been rejected of God yet he did not become king right away. It was not until after the death of Saul that the nation acted on God’s nomination and David was elected king over Judah.

*“And it came to pass after this, that David inquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron...And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah. And they told David, saying, That the men of Jabeshgilead were they that buried Saul” (2 Samuel 2:1,4).*

And after reigning in Hebron for seven years the rest of the

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nation also responded to God's nomination decree and all Israel chose David as king.

*"Then came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel"* (2 Samuel 5:1-3).

There are several crucial points we need to note here so we can really begin to understand the nature of the covenant that God was to make with David.

1. The kings of Israel were all chosen personally by God.
2. The Hebrew kingship was an elective office. No man was king until he had been elected to that office by the elders of the people.
3. The monarchy was therefore not a hereditary monarchy. In spite of the later appearances to the contrary it remained constitutionally an elective monarchy.

### The Covenant:

The actual covenant that God made with David is recorded for us in the seventh chapter of 2 Samuel. David has told Nathan the prophet of his intention to build a house for the Lord. And Nathan, without consulting the Lord, gives his approval.

*"And it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in*

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*an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee” (2 Samuel 7:1-3).*

However the Lord had other purposes in his sovereign plan. And although the Lord had ordained that not David himself but his son Solomon would be the one to build the temple, God responds graciously to David’s desire to honor him. As the Lord himself said, “...*them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30).* Rather than David building him a house, that is a temple to dwell in as the true king of Israel, it is the Lord that will build a house for David.

*“And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever” (2 Samuel 7:11-16).*

There is a little play on words here with the term “*house*”. David has in mind to build a house, a temple, for God to dwell in with his people. God who ruled the nation from the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle was living in what was essentially a tent. David, having established himself in a royal palace in Jerusalem, senses the inequity in this

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arrangement, and proposes to build a temple, a royal palace for the true king of Israel. God responds by stating that it is he that will build a “house” for David. A “house” not of stone and timber and royal furnishings, but a “house” in the sense of a dynasty.

That this is not merely another gracious divine promise but an actual covenant is specifically stated in the scriptures. David himself refers to it as such on his deathbed, saying,

*“Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow”* (2 Samuel 23:1-5).

And the prophet Jeremiah specifically calls it God’s covenant with David.

*“And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers”* (Jeremiah 33:19-21).

## The Promises:



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The promises of the Davidic Covenant were very plain and simple. God promised that David's posterity would sit on his throne in perpetuity. God covenanted that the reign of the seed of David would be established in his kingdom forever.

*"And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever"* (2 Samuel 7:16).

This was not just for the duration of the kingdom or for the duration of some present age. The promise was that his seed would rule on his throne forever, for all eternity. The incredible extent of this promise, the scope of this covenant, is expressly set forth in scripture.

*"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah...His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven...My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah"* (Psalm 89:3-4, 29, 34-37).

If the term *"to all generations"* were not sufficient the psalmist adds that the throne of David occupied by his seed will endure as long as the sun and the moon, and as long as the *"days of heaven"*. This comprehends a royal dynasty that will span a future eternity. Two things are actually covenanted here. First of all a throne, and a kingdom, that will last for all eternity. And secondly a royal dynasty that will occupy that throne for all generations without end.

A second promise of the covenant is that God will restrain his judgments on David's royal seed and limit the consequences

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of their sins. He will still judge their iniquities and deal with their transgressions. However he will restrain his wrath and never totally cut off David's royal seed or permanently cut off his dynasty. Of Solomon he says,

*"I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever"* (2 Samuel 7:14-16).

And the psalmist echoes this covenant promise saying,

*"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me"* (Psalm 89:30-36).

This is the second great and gracious provision of this covenant.

It is important to understand exactly what God is promising to do here. The constitution of the Hebrew Republic was not changed by this covenant. The monarchy remained an elective monarchy. This did not establish a hereditary monarchy; it did not establish a constitutional right for David's sons to succeed him to the throne. What it did was commit God to, in perpetuity, nominate David's sons to be his choice for the succession. And it also committed God to providentially see that the nation affirmed his choice and constitutionally elected

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them to the kingly office. We see the workings out of this when we study the history of the dynasty as it unfolds.

At David's death his eldest son Adonijah, with powerful support from the High Priest Abiathar and the army commander Joab, campaigned for the kingship. However Solomon was the Lord's choice. This was revealed by the Lord to his father David.

*“Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever” (1 Chronicles 22:6-10).*

As a result of this knowledge David intervened, with the support of Zadok the priest, Bathsheba the Queen, and Nathan the prophet, and secured the coronation of Solomon (1 Kings 1).

A similar pattern of events occurred with respect to the succession when Solomon passed away. Because of Solomon's apostasy and idolatry in his old age God chose one of his officers, named Jeroboam, to succeed him.

*“And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: And he said to*

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*Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father” (1 Kings 11:29-33).*

However in accordance with the promises of the Davidic Covenant God preserved the Davidic dynasty giving Solomon's son the throne of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. Solomon's reaction to God's choice was the same as Saul's had been to David's anointing by Samuel. As Saul had sought to kill David to preserve his dynasty so “*Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon” (1 Kings 11:40).*

At Solomon's death the tribes assembled to elect the next king. The elders of Israel called for Jeroboam to appear before them as they clearly were considering both him and Rehoboam, Solomon's son. Rehoboam lost the election because he refused to grant the reforms requested by the elders of Israel.

*“And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat. So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them,*

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*the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents” (1 Kings 12:13-16).*

They then elected Jereboam as king.

*“And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only” (1 Kings 12:20).*

All this was strictly constitutional and in accordance with the will of God. This is not only clear in the foregoing passage that stated that all this was “*from the LORD*”, but also by God’s dealings with Jereboam.

*“And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever” (1 Kings 11:37-39).*

In all these events we get an appreciation of the exact nature of this covenant. We see how the succession worked from each generation to the next. We see God judging the sins of David’s sons and how this affected the succession. We also see God’s covenant faithfulness in maintaining the Davidic dynasty in spite of its sins against him.

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### The Parties:

The parties to this covenant are God and David. And like all of God's covenants with man the covenant is made by God and is made with a representative man and his seed after him. So this covenant is between God and the house of David, between God and David and David's posterity. The covenant was made with David but its blessings, provisions, and promises include David's posterity. This is evidenced from the very first promulgation of this covenant, which includes promises pertaining to Solomon.

*“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever”* (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

That Solomon and his sons were beneficiaries of the promises of this covenant is manifestly clear from the inspired record of God's dealings with them. When Solomon apostatized in his old age and fell into idolatry the Lord dealt mercifully with him according to the terms of this covenant. This was unlike God's dealings with Saul whose dynasty was cut off due to his sin.

*“Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen”* (1 Kings 11:11-13).

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From this passage it is clear that God maintained Solomon on the throne the remainder of his days and secured the succession of his son Rehoboam in accordance with the terms of the Davidic Covenant. It is obvious that they were included in the provisions of the Covenant.

It is also important to note that the Covenant did not include all of David's seed. It only pertained to the royal seed of David. David, due to his sinful polygamy, had multiple wives and concubines. Solomon's transgression of the constitutional stipulation that the king should not, "...*multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away*" (Deuteronomy 17:17), was even more extreme. He had 300 wives and 700 concubines and they did turn his heart away from the true God unto idols. Now the covenant did not include the progeny of all these marriages. Only the royal seed were included in the covenant. That is only those who were the heirs to the throne came into the covenant. All the others had no interest in the covenant. But in each generation, each heir in turn became a beneficiary of the covenant promises. Of all David's seed, Adonijah, Absalom, Amnon, and all the other sons, and all the daughters for that matter had no stake in the covenant. Only Solomon had the promise that his seed would sit forever on the throne of his father David. Only Solomon had the promise that God would restrain his judgments on his sins and not entirely cut off his royal seed. And in the succeeding generation only Rehoboam could claim these promises. Only the royal seed, not all the seed, were included in this covenant. We will see the significance of this when we study the genealogy of Jesus Christ.

### **The Purpose:**

The purpose of this covenant is simple. Like all the previous covenants God made with man this covenant is step toward the fulfillment of the purposes of the Trinitarian Covenant. That covenant had purposed an eternal kingdom.

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That purpose requires an eternal king or at the very least an eternal dynasty. The Abrahamic Covenant had promised to provide kings out of Abraham's seed. The Sinaitic Covenant had provided for the institution of kingship in God's prototype kingdom. Now this covenant will provide the dynasty that will rule God's true kingdom forever in a future glorious eternity. This covenant will provide the eternal king, whose reign will never end, and who will rule in righteousness forever over the people of God. This covenant in short will provide for the eternal theocratic reign of Jesus of Nazareth, the Lord's Christ, the promised Son of David.

### The Requirements:

As an unconditional covenant there were no requirements upon which the fulfillment of the covenant hinged. Ultimately God guaranteed that he would fulfil the terms of this covenant. This was an everlasting covenant that could not be broken.

*"I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations"* (Psalm 89:3-4).

*"Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season; Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers... Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them"*  
(Jeremiah 33:20-21,25-26).



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Nonetheless there were requirements of those in the covenant. There were requirements of obedience and faithfulness for there to be a smooth and continuous succession of the covenant promises throughout time. The covenant was not a free pass for sinful and apostate kings. Their sins would still be judged with severe consequences for the dynasty.

The same promise that declared, *“His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven”* (Psalm 89:29) also taught,

*“If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes”* (Psalm 89:30-32).

This echoed the warnings of the covenant as originally revealed to David, which spoke concerning David’s royal seed,

*“I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee”* (2 Samuel 7:14-15).

These warnings were not idle and the history of the dynasty records the implementation of these threats. David’s sons were at times cut off for their sins and sent to an early grave while others went into captivity and languished in prison instead of prospering on David’s throne. The covenant required faithfulness and obedience of David’s sons and the consequences of disobedience could be very real. Although the ultimate preservation of the dynasty was assured, it could be cast down for a season due to the sins of David’s sons. It is not for nothing that the scriptures record,

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*“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up”* (Acts 15:16).

### The Curse of Coniah:

The great conundrum of the Davidic Covenant is the “*curse of Coniah*” recorded for us in the prophecies of Jeremiah. For years Jeremiah had been calling the nation of Judah, and it’s Davidic dynasty, to repentance. God commanded Jeremiah to write his warnings to the nation in a scroll.

*“And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin”* (Jeremiah 36:1-3).

In the gracious providence of God the scroll was used to convict the princes of Judah of the nation’s sins and the need of repentance. They caused the scroll to be read in the presence of King Jehoiakim, but there it suffered a different reception. An impatient and impenitent king hardened his heart against the righteous decrees of God and cut up the scroll into pieces and cast them into the fire. This was no true son of David and the divine reaction was swift. God’s longsuffering patience with the sinful House of David came to an end. God caused Jeremiah to rewrite the scroll but this time there were some additional decrees included in it. Specifically it included a decree against Jehoiakim, King of Judah.

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*“Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah; He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not” (Jeremiah 36:30-31).*

Here we have an amazing thing. The seed royal of the House of David, that was promised existence in perpetuity, that was given a throne that was to stand forever, is cut off. The lawful heir to David’s throne and all his posterity are disinherited, for of this king, Jahweh declares, *“He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David.”* The present heir of the covenant promise that his seed would sit on his throne forever is condemned by a perpetual curse that prohibits any of his seed from ever ascending the throne of his fathers. Incredible as this may seem it is real. And neither was God slack in executing this sentence, for in the very next generation, when Jeconiah ascends the throne of Judah, the Lord deals with this son of Jehoiakim, with this seed of the apostate House of David, and testifies against him by the mouth of his servant Jeremiah.

*“As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not? O earth, earth, earth,*

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*hear the word of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah” (Jeremiah 22:24-30).*

This fall, this seemingly permanent fall, of the Davidic dynasty, a dynasty that was destined to produce the Messianic King in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed is an earth shattering event. Jeremiah cries out, “ *O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.*” This pronouncement is not just for Israel. The whole earth is to know that they can have no hope in the seed of Jeconiah. And Jeconiah, whose name signifies, “*Jahweh will establish*” has his name changed to Coniah. The “*Jah*” for Jahweh is removed from his name for this man Jahweh will never establish. Instead the Lord says of him, “*Write ye this man childless*”. The word for childless is the same word used in Leviticus concerning the progeny of the forbidden degrees of marriage. It does not mean that Jeconiah will not have children for he obviously did. What it means is that he will have no legitimate issue. His children will not be legally recognized and legally he will be considered childless. He will have no legitimate heirs to his throne, the throne of David. He is man under a curse, a curse that said of him, “*for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah*”.

This curse provides one of the great contradictions of the Old Testament. An everlasting covenant that God has sworn he will never break establishes the throne of David, with his seed upon it, forever. And now a perpetual curse on his seed royal bars his heirs from ever again sitting on that throne. How can this be? For centuries the children of Israel had to puzzle over this apparent contradiction. And dark centuries they were. The House of David had indeed fallen down. The Davidic dynasty was in exile. And when a remnant was suffered to return in God’s gracious providence the dynasty was not restored. How

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could it be? God had cast it down, seemingly forever. It would indeed take the faith of their father Abraham to still believe God's covenant promises. The faith of Abraham, who had believed God's promises of posterity when that too had seemed impossible, when he and Sarah were barren in their old age.

### The Fulfillment:

At the time of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth the Jews were still awaiting their long expected Messiah. For centuries the Davidic dynasty had lain dormant and now the Romans ruled in Palestine. Many had long given up on the Davidic Covenant and like the Sadducees placed their hopes elsewhere, either in the Hasmonean rulers or in an alliance with the Edomite dynasty of Herod the Great. Nonetheless the faithful among the people continued to await the coming of the Messianic King, the long expected Son of David, who would resurrect the kingdom and rule over them forevermore. This king would be the Lord's Anointed. He would bear the title "The Anointed One". In Hebrew this was "The Messiah" and in Greek that would be "The Christ". So when the wise men from the East came to Jerusalem looking for the "King of the Jews", who had had no king for centuries and were now ruled by Edomites and Romans, it came as a surprise.

*"When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel" (Matthew 2:3-6).*

It should not have been a surprise for the coming of the Christ had been long foretold. And there were a multitude of

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prophecies about the nature of the coming Christ, the long expected Son of David. In the verse from which the Pharisees instructed Herod we have such a prophecy. In the original it said,

*“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”* (Micah 5:2).

Here their Ruler, the promised Christ, the promised Son of David, is set forth as being Jahweh himself, the great I AM, the pre-existent one, *“whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting”*. Long after the fall of the Davidic dynasty the prophet Micah is still predicting the coming of the Messianic King. Somehow God will solve the great mystery and still fulfil his covenant with David. But it will no mere man, no mere human seed of David that will sit on his throne. It will be God himself. It will be Emmanuel, God with us. The Psalmists also prophesied likewise. David himself under divine inspiration declares of his Greater Son,

*“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee...Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him”* (Psalm 2:6-7,11-12).

*“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is*

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*this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah“ (Psalm 24:7-10).*

*“My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer...Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre...So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him” (Psalm 45:1,6,11).*

This Messianic King, this promised Son of David, would be their God and would rule over them forever in righteousness and they would worship him. But how was all this to ever be fulfilled? How could the seed of David, under a perpetual curse, bring forth a royal king who would be divine as well as human? The answers are found in the birth and genealogy of Jesus of Nazareth. The answer is proclaimed in the first verse of the New Testament.

*“The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1).*

Jesus of Nazareth is the promised seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed. Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Son of David who will sit on his throne forevermore. Jesus of Nazareth is the person whom the Jews had been expecting for centuries and Matthew identifies him in the first verse of his gospel. He is the answer to the riddle to the Davidic Covenant. He is the answer to the mystery of the God-King who will rule over Israel for a future eternity. It was of him that the angel told Mary,

*“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:*

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*and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:30-33).*

And it was of him that the angels told the shepherds of Bethlehem,

*“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11).*

And it was of him that the scriptures record,

*“And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:25-32).*

And so he was proclaimed to all Israel.

*“And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest” (Luke 19:37-38).*



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*“And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest”* (Matthew 21:8-9).

*“Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; ...Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:29-30,36).

And so he is proclaimed to the church.

*“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh”* (Romans 1:3).

*“Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel”* (2 Timothy 2:8).

*“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth”* (Revelation 3:7).

*“And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof”* (Revelation 5:5).

*“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star”* (Revelation 22:16).

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But again we must ask the question how could all this be? Even Mary questioned Gabriel after his announcement of the birth of Christ saying, “*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*” (Luke 1:34). The answer lies in the virgin birth. First of all through the agency of the Holy Spirit and by the means of the virgin birth the promised Son of David would indeed be Jahweh himself, the second person of the Trinity.

*“And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”* (Luke 1:35).

And just as significantly the virgin birth was the means by which God resolved the ancient riddle of the Davidic Covenant. There are two genealogies of Christ recorded for us in the New Testament. They are different but not in conflict as both are true. Matthew’s gospel sets forth Christ as the King of Israel, as David’s Royal Son. It therefore gives us the genealogy of his father Joseph. It traces Christ’s genealogy back to Abraham to establish Christ as the promised seed of Abraham. But just as significantly it traces his genealogy through the royal line of David, from David through Jeconiah, and on down to Joseph, the husband of Mary of whom was born Christ. This is one half of the puzzle. The other half is the genealogy of Christ recorded in Luke’s gospel. Luke sets forth Christ as the Son of Man. It therefore records not his royal descent but his true humanity. Luke records the genealogy of his mother Mary through whom Christ received his human nature. And Mary also is descended from David the King. Her genealogy goes all the way back to Adam to establish Christ’s true humanity as a descendant of Adam. And it traces the genealogy through David and then not through the royal line and through Jeconiah, but another way through Nathan, another son of David. So what we have here is unique. We have Christ as actually

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descended from David through the flesh as required by the Davidic Covenant.

*“And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever”* (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

And secondly we have Christ as not having descended from Jeconiah and therefore not under the permanent curse affixed to his posterity. And thirdly we have Christ as the eldest son of Joseph, the legal heir of David's throne and David's successor in that generation. Joseph could never rule, not only because of God's providential judgments placing Judah under Rome, but also because of his descent through Jeconiah. But he can pass his birthright on to his eldest but adopted son Jesus. And by this means the curse is circumvented and in God's own good time Christ comes forth from Mary to rightfully assume the throne of his father David. How marvelous are the ways of the Lord. As the Lord told Isaiah,

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8-9).

### **The Grace:**

This covenant is sheer grace, it is all grace. When the Children of Israel asked Samuel for a king the reason was because of sin, the sin of Samuel's sons.

*“And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to*

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*Samuel unto Ramah, And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:3-5).*

And the scriptures also make clear that the asking for a king was also sinful, constituting a rejection of Jahweh as being their King and a dissatisfaction with His rule.

*“But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them” (1 Samuel 8:6-7).*

*“And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands” (1 Samuel 10:17-19).*

All we see here is sin. We see the wickedness of Samuel’s sons being the occasion of the people, in their murmuring and discontent, sinfully rejecting God’s reign over them and desiring a king like the other nations. Since the Hebrew constitution provided for kingship the act itself was not sinful per se. However their motives and attitude certainly were for the scriptural testimony is clear that their request was sinful and the Lord is the discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Yet what does God do with all this sin? And what does God do with the terrible sins of Israel’s first King, Saul? Does the Lord

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condemn and judge and visit the nation with the full consequences of all their national sins? No, not at all. Rather the Lord brings good out of it. God orders it all for good. Out of all this sin he brings forth the Davidic dynasty which culminates in the eternal kingship of his Son, Jesus Christ. This is certainly all a marvel of God's grace.

And yet there is still so much more to testify to God's grace in these matters. Many years later the seed of David had hopelessly corrupted itself. The heirs of David's promises had become totally unfit to rule. The Davidic dynasty had been virtually extinct for centuries due to its sin and God's righteous curse on that sin. Yet out of all this God brings to fulfillment the most glorious promises. Out of this seemingly hopeless situation God bring forth the most glorious King imaginable. He brings forth his Son, born of a woman, born of the seed of David, and sets him on David's throne. If this is not an unimaginable outpouring of divine grace, then what is? Surely this is a most gracious covenant.

**CHAPTER 7**  
**THE NEW COVENANT**

**The Covenant:**

The prophecy of the coming of this covenant and the fullest description of its terms are found in the writings of Jeremiah.

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath. And the whole valley*

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*of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever” (Jeremiah 31:31-40).*

This was written at a time when the failures of the Sinaitic Covenant were becoming apparent. The Northern Kingdom, the ten tribes that had defected from the Davidic dynasty under Jereboam, had already gone into captivity. They had not attained the blessings offered in the covenant. Rather they had succumbed to idolatry and covenant breaking and had come under the sanctions of the covenant and not its benefits. However there was yet hope. Judah had remained faithful to the House of David, had continued to await the Messiah, the promised Son of David, and had maintained the system of worship according to the ceremonial law. They continued to worship Jahweh, the true King of Israel, in his temple in Jerusalem. But now even that was coming to an end. The Southern Kingdom had for the most part already gone into captivity. A small remnant remained in Judah under the puppet king, Zedekiah. False prophets were predicting an imminent deliverance from the yoke of the Babylonians. In Chapter 28 Jeremiah confronts these false prophets and testifies to the reality of God’s continuing judgments on Judah. In Chapter 29 Jeremiah writes to the captives in Babylon and warns them not to trust in the lies of the false prophets, to make the best of their captivity, that it will endure a full seventy years, and that God judgments will continue on Jerusalem and on Zedekiah. In chapter 30 Jeremiah prophesies of a return from their captivity. However it is not the return from the Babylonian Captivity that Jeremiah refers to. He is looking far into the future to the end of the age. His prophecy is not addressed to just Judah but to all Israel.

*“Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. For, lo, the*

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*days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah” (Jeremiah 30:2-4).*

And speaking of that day Jeremiah continues,

*“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished” (Jeremiah 30:7-11).*

However as Jeremiah comforts Israel with the promise of the gracious fulfillment of all God’s covenant purposes he does not point them to the Sinaitic Covenant. Rather he points them to the Davidic Covenant and the Messianic King that it will produce. He points them to the Son of David in whom their hope must be fixed. He is thus pointing them to Jesus Christ and to the New Covenant. And this leads right into chapter 31, which continues to speak of the final restoration of all Israel and concludes with the great prophecy concerning the New Covenant. So in these darkest of times Jeremiah is a messenger of new hope for Israel, a messenger of ultimate victory. This



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victory however will not be through the Sinaitic Covenant and the works of the law, but through Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. This will be Israel's only hope.

### The Purpose:

The purpose of every covenant is to further the purposes of all the covenants that have gone before and contribute towards the fulfillment of these prior covenants. Particularly each covenant is designed to take additional steps in the accomplishment of the goals of the original covenant, the Trinitarian Covenant. However it is through this covenant that all shall be fulfilled. It is through the New Covenant, the final covenant, that all God's purposes in his creation and in the human race will be fulfilled and brought to fruition.

First of all we have the fulfillment of the Covenant of Works for the elect. There were two aspects to the Covenant of Works. One was that it required perfect obedience and the second was the death penalty for any transgression of the covenant. The atonement that Christ has made for his people, the atonement he made by the shed blood of the New Covenant, therefore also has two parts. First of all Christ paid the penalty for our sins by his substitutionary death on the cross. Secondly Christ in our place lived a perfect, sinless, and holy life on our behalf. Our sins were imputed to him and his perfect righteousness is imputed to us. In this perfect and complete work of redemption Christ has fulfilled all the requirements of the Covenant of Works for all his people, for all those he represented in the work of the atonement.

Next we have the fulfillment of the purposes of the Noahic Covenant. The Noahic Covenant was implemented to restrain God's judgments on a sinful and fallen world until God's redemptive purposes could be fulfilled. And through the New Covenant they are all being fulfilled. Through Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and by the shedding of his blood, the blood of the New Covenant, God's redemption has

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been accomplished and under the New Covenant that redemption will continue to be applied until all his elect have been called out and the kingdom established.

Thirdly we have in this covenant the fulfillment of all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. Christ is the promised seed in whom all the families of the earth will be blessed. Through Christ all the seed of Abraham will be redeemed and inherit all the covenant promises. And justification by faith, which is the very foundation of God's covenant with Abraham, is based on faith in Christ and in his atonement, the once and for all sacrifice of the New Covenant. The promise of a seed as numerous as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore is fulfilled through Christ, for all who are united to him by faith are counted as the seed, and will compose that great multitude described in the Book of the Revelation.

*“After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands” (Revelation 7:9).*

And the promise of kings coming out of Abraham has its ultimate fulfillment in the eternal kingship of Jesus Christ. And the promise of the land given to Abraham, that has never been fulfilled in this world, will be fulfilled at the return of Christ. Then Abraham will see its fulfillment in a future eternity in the kingdom of God and in that new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Yes, truly, all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are yea and amen in Jesus Christ!

Fourthly we see in the New Covenant the fulfillment of the hopes of the Sinaitic Covenant which it replaced. The Sinaitic Covenant could not save those under it. As Paul stated it,

*“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not*

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*by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16).*

*“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:4-10).*

Paul, the likely author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, takes a great deal of time in that letter to expound on the deficiencies of the Sinaitic Covenant and the superiority of the New Covenant. A better mediator, a better priesthood, a better sacrifice, and the list goes on. All that the Sinaitic Covenant offered but failed to accomplish was fulfilled in the New Covenant. All of Israel's hopes in the Sinaitic Covenant, that were frustrated by their sin, are fulfilled in the New Covenant of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Fifthly we see in the New Covenant the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. We have already seen how David's descendants forfeited their right to rule by their sins. It is only through Jesus Christ, that the Davidic Covenant has been fulfilled and there will be a Son of David who will rule on his throne over the people of God for all eternity. And finally we have in the New Covenant the fulfillment of the Trinitarian Covenant. All of God's redemptive purposes are fulfilled and brought to complete fruition through the New Covenant. An everlasting kingdom, an eternal king, a redeemed people, and a

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new earth, all these are the fruits of the New Covenant. It is through Jesus Christ and the New Covenant that all of God's covenant purposes are fulfilled. Hallelujah!

### The Parties:

Who are the parties to this covenant? With whom did God make this covenant? This is a major issue. The text may seem clear but the interpretation has been strongly disputed. Some, particularly amillennialists, contend that the covenant is solely made with the church. Others, particularly dispensationalists, contend that it was solely made with Israel, that is Israel according to the flesh, and has nothing to do with the church. Which is true or are they both wrong? I believe that they are both right, right in the sense that they have both correctly identified a party to this covenant. I also believe that they are both wrong, wrong in incorrectly excluding a party to this covenant. In short I believe that the parties to this covenant are God and Israel, and that Israel includes both the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as well as the church. To establish this we need to carefully examine the scriptural texts relating to this covenant.

The scriptures plainly state that the covenant will be made with "*with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah*". As Dr. Butler has clearly pointed out, this particular expression, "*the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah*", always refers in the scriptures to physical Israel and never to the church. Jeremiah is speaking to Israel. His prophecy of this covenant is in a letter written to the remnant of physical Israel in captivity in Babylon. He is writing in the context of the ultimate restoration of physical Israel from all their troubles. It is difficult if not impossible to rule them out as parties to the covenant. At the time of this prophecy it is certainly physical Israel that is in view. The mystery of the call of Gentiles had not yet been clearly made known to Israel. On the other hand it is clear that it is the church that has been the recipient of the

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blessings of the New Covenant. It is the church that has the Lord's Christ as her risen Head and it is the church that is redeemed by the blood of the New Covenant. How can we reconcile these views?

We have to go back to the Abrahamic Covenant. We have to remember that the Sinaitic Covenant was made with the same people as were under the Abrahamic Covenant and in partial fulfillment of its promises. The New Covenant replaces the failed Sinaitic Covenant and is made with the same people as were under the Sinaitic Covenant, that is it is made with Israel, it is made with the seed of Abraham. But who are the seed of Abraham? Paul tells us clearly in Galatians.

*“Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham...For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus...And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise”*  
(Galatians 3:6-9,26,29).

The salvation offered in the Abrahamic Covenant, salvation based on justification by faith, is fulfilled in the New Covenant. And all these covenants, the Abrahamic, the Sinaitic, and the New, are all made with the same parties. God has never changed his plans or his purposes nor has he broken any of his covenant promises. Salvation was covenanted to the seed of Abraham and so it still is. We merely need to pay careful attention to how this term, “*the seed of Abraham*” is defined in scripture. Paul addresses this issue further in his letter to the Romans. There he teaches not that God has rejected the physical seed of Abraham, Israel according to the flesh, in favor of something else, such as the church. Rather he teaches that

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physical paternity is not enough and that God divides the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel by his electing decrees.

*“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated”* (Romans 9:6-13).

God is keeping his covenant with Abraham. He is sending his salvation to the seed of Abraham, but not to all of them. He selects Isaac and rejects Ishmael. He chooses Jacob and casts off Esau. As Christ taught, *“Salvation is of the Jews”*, but not all Israelites are part of the true Israel of God. It is as wrong to discount the significance of physical Israel as it is to foolishly base one’s salvation simply on race and paternity. Paul clearly says,

*“I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew...Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace”* (Romans 11:1-2,5).

Paul goes on to give us the key to this matter further on this chapter.

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*“For if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?”* (Romans 11:16-24).

The olive tree stands for Israel; it represents the true Israel of God. It includes all the natural seed of Abraham, all of the children of Israel, except those who like Ishmael and Esau and the unbelieving generation in the wilderness, who have been cut off due to their unbelief. It also includes all the believing Gentiles, all those who have the faith of their father Abraham, all those who are united by faith to Jesus Christ, the true “*Seed of Abraham*”. It includes all the elect of God in Jesus Christ, all the true Israelites, all those who are truly children of Abraham, the father of the faithful. It is wrong to regard the unbelieving branches as being part of the covenant people of God as dispensationalists constantly do. It is just as wrong to say that God has cast off his people and broken his covenant with the descendants of Abraham. It is not a matter of Israel or the church. It is a matter of God’s electing decrees being worked

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out in history as he prunes and grafts his olive tree, which represents the true Israel of God.

We need to stop positing false dichotomies. One such false dichotomy is between Israel according to the flesh and the church. What we need to understand is that Christ meant it when he stated, “*salvation is of the Jews*” (John 4:22). Consider the way he dealt with the Syrophenician woman.

*“Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour”* (Matthew 15:21-28).

Christ clearly maintained the truth that God’s covenanted salvation is for Israel. However when this pagan woman professed the faith of Abraham she come under the blessings covenanted to the children of Abraham. The truth is there is no dichotomy between the true Israel of God and the church. For Gentiles to come into the covenanted blessings they need to become the seed of Abraham, they need to become Israelites. Salvation is of the Jews. We just need to keep in mind that being a “Jew” is more than merely having physical descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.



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*“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:28-29).*

We have already repeatedly noted that Gentile believers are called the seed of Abraham by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. Paul adds to this argument in his letter to the Ephesians.

*“Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby...Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:11-16,19-22).*

Paul teaches that there was once a radical division between the Jews and the Gentiles that was enforced by the middle wall of partition. Paul states at that time they were “*aliens from the*

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*commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise*". The consequences of this status was that they were without "*hope, and without God in the world*". Salvation was of the Jews, salvation was for those in the covenant and the Gentiles were without. But Paul goes on to state that a wonderful thing has happened. Through Christ the middle wall of partition has been broken down. And in Christ Gentile believers "*are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God*". Paul teaches that the division between believing Jews and believing Gentiles has been abolished. He states that Christ "*hath made both one*", making "*of twain one new man*", resulting in one "*building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord*". If Paul says that we are all one now why do so many commentators and theologians maintain dichotomies that have been abolished? His teaching is simple. Paul says there is one olive tree, representing the people of God, not two, with one representing Israel and the other the church. That one olive tree consists of literal Israel with the unbelieving branches pruned out and believing Gentiles grafted in. It consists of all the believers who have true faith in Jesus Christ as required by the Abrahamic Covenant. In short it consists of what we today call the church of Jesus Christ.

In the Old Testament Israel, under the Sinaitic Covenant, was called to be a holy nation.

*"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation"* (Exodus 19:5-6).

Under the New Covenant it is the church of Jesus Christ that is that holy nation. The Apostle Peter addresses his epistle to the churches of Asia Minor, composed of Jews and Gentiles. What they have in common is that they are all the elect of God, sanctified by the Spirit. Of these churches Peter says,

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*“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).*

Anther false dichotomy that is often proposed is the dichotomy between a literal or a physical Israel and a spiritual Israel. But there is only one real Israel, the people of God, represented by the olive tree. The only really valid distinction would be between the two components of the olive tree. There we can recognize the distinction between a natural seed and an adopted seed, between natural branches and branches that have been grafted in. In Christ Gentile believers have been adopted as the seed of Abraham and grafted into the elect nation.

So in conclusion who is the New Covenant made with? It is made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah, it is therefore made with all Israel, and all Israel includes the church, which in our day is the true Israel of God. And what then of physical Israel? Are they cast off? Paul says no. He says that in each generation there is a remnant of believing Jews according to the election of grace. Two errors must be avoided. One is to regard the unbelieving branches that have been pruned out as being the covenant people of God. The other is to maintain that God has broken his covenant with Israel. Paul states that at the end of the age God will graft the unbelieving branches back in again.

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Romans 11:25-27).*

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Many of the Old Testament prophets foresaw this final restoration of Israel and proclaimed it in their prophecies as did Zechariah.

*“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn”* (Zechariah 12:10).

This is all a testimony to God’s covenant faithfulness. The pruning out of unbelief and the grafting in of those of faith does not break the covenant; it only demonstrates how God is administering his covenant promises. Rather than Gentile believers discarding literal Israel as being meaningless and contemptible and preening themselves on their spirituality they ought to take the Apostle Paul’s advice.

*“Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee”* (Romans 11:18-21).

After all there is nothing to boast about. We are not better than the branches that were cut off, for our salvation is all of grace, it is all according to God’s electing decrees. Even the faith that the covenant requires, the faith that distinguishes us from the unbelieving branches is not of ourselves, as Paul teaches.

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*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We ought the rather to heed Paul’s warning which includes a prophecy not only of the restoration of Israel but of the cutting off of the Gentiles in turn for their unbelief.

*“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in”* (Romans 11:25).

The fullness of the Gentiles should be taken the same way as in the following passage.

*“And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full”* (Genesis 15:15-16).

When the wickedness of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan reached it’s fullness God would deal with them in judgment and dispossess them of the land and give it to his people in fulfillment of his covenant promises to Abraham. When the iniquity of the Gentiles, that is of the professing Gentile believers, is full, they too will be dealt with in turn and be pruned out of the olive tree. As we look around us today at the spiritual state of the professing church and the rampant apostasy and unbelief we certainly have no basis for boasting against the unbelieving branches. Paul’s warnings were certainly meant for such a time as this!

### **The Promises:**

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The basic promise of the New Covenant is the same as that of the Abrahamic and of the Sinaitic Covenants. The Abrahamic Covenant had promised,

*“And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee”* (Genesis 17:7).

The Sinaitic Covenant had promised,

*“And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people”* (Leviticus 26:11-12).

And so does the New Covenant promise,

*“But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people”* (Jeremiah 31:33).

After the fall and the expulsion from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden men were no longer children of God in the full sense of that term. God was still their Creator and still sovereign over them as God but no longer their God, no longer their Father in heaven. The great promise of these covenants is that God will reverse the sentence on our first parents. He will again be our Father. He will receive us as his sons, he will adopt us as his children in Jesus Christ.

*“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”* (John 1:11-12).

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*“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”* (Galatians 4:4-6).

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will”* (Ephesians 1:4-5).

Progressively this promise has come to greater fulfillment under each successive covenant. God walked with Abraham, visited him, and spoke with him personally even as God had walked with Adam and Eve in the garden. Under the Sinaitic Covenant God dwelled with Israel. The Shekinah glory was the visible sign of his presence. He personally ruled them from his throne room in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle. And under the New Covenant God dwells within us and we are temples of the living God.

*“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

The ultimate fulfillment of this covenant promise will be in the eternal state when the kingdom of God is established in all its fulness.

*“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her*

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*husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God” (Revelation 21:1-3).*

An additional promise of the New Covenant as recorded by Jeremiah was, *“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts”*. This promise and its meaning were elaborated on by the Apostle Paul.

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people” (Hebrews 8:10).*

Paul defines what *“inward parts”* means and relates it to the heart and to the mind. He relates it to the unfulfilled promise of the Sinaitic Covenant,

*“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6).*

He relates it to the realities of the New Covenant.

*“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3).*

*“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (Ephesians 4:23).*

For what is really being promised here is a new heart and a new mind, in short the new birth, regeneration. This is one of



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the great promises and blessings of the New Covenant. At Sinai Israel was given the law written with the very finger of God in tables of stone. Under the New Covenant we are made new creatures in Christ with renewed hearts, which delight in the law of God. It is not of course being implied that Old Testament saints were not regenerated. What is being implied is that this is a blessing of the New Covenant, and the fruit of the atonement offered by Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God “*slain from the foundations of the world*” the benefits of his sacrifice were already administered under previous covenant administrations. Adam and Eve were warned that in they day they ate of the forbidden fruit they would surely die. They didn’t die because God prepared them coats of skins from animal sacrifices typical of the true sacrifice of Jesus Christ under the New Covenant. But the same Bible that teaches the necessity of regeneration saying, “*Ye must be born again*”, also teaches that the new birth is a blessing of the New Covenant.

### The Requirements:

The requirements of the New Covenant are the same as the requirements of the Abrahamic Covenant it fulfils. The requirement is faith. The Sinaitic Covenant required works. The Old Testament saints were not saved by the works of law but through faith as we are. They were saved under the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant as they looked forward in faith to Jesus Christ and the New Covenant. We have already seen that Abraham was justified by faith, and noted Paul’s argument in Galatians that faith is the essence of the Abrahamic Covenant. But faith, and justification thereby, is also the very essence of the New Covenant.

*“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).*

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*“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God”* (Romans 3:20-25).

The essence of the gospel, of salvation by faith in Christ, is summed up by the Apostle John when he said,

*“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:11 through John 1:13).

As Paul tells the Hebrews,

*“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Hebrews 11:6).

From the days of Abraham, through the early Apostolic Church, on through the Great Protestant Reformation, until the very present, the great requirement for God’s people to be included in his covenant has been faith.

### **The Fulfillment:**

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The fulfillment of the New Covenant was in the life, work, and the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The covenant itself was inaugurated at the Last Supper when Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, a sacrament of the New Covenant.

*“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins”* (Matthew 26:26-28).

The Book of Hebrews records the fulfillment of the New Covenant. It records the mediatorship, priesthood, prophetic ministry, and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It sets these forth as demonstrations of the superiority of the New Covenant over the Sinaitic Covenant.

*“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds”* (Hebrews 1:1-2).

*“But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.”* (Hebrews 8:6).

*“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:22-25).

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*“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect...But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God...For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”* (Hebrews 10:1,12,14).

In short everything in the New Covenant, that fell short in the Old Covenant, is fulfilled and brought to a glorious fruition in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In a sense the covenant was fulfilled when he completed the work of redemption on the cross and cried out, *“It is finished”*. However the ultimate fulfillment of this covenant will be in the new heavens and the new earth, it will be in the kingdom of God.

### The Grace:

It seems almost superfluous to have to answer this question. It is so manifestly clear that the whole ministration of the New Covenant is an exercise in grace. After all the person of Jesus Christ is the very heart of the covenant. And the scriptures declare,

*“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17).

The atonement was a work of sheer grace as Paul states in Hebrews.

*“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Hebrews 2:9).

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The redemption from the fall, the new creation, and the future glories of the kingdom of God, are all works of God's grace. The testimony of each covenant is that man can only sin and bring ruin and destruction upon himself. The hope of each covenant is in the unconditional, unilateral, gracious promises of God, who cannot fail. Little wonder that the oft repeated benediction of the New Covenant is,

*“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Ephesians 1:2).

Amen!

## CHAPTER 8 COVENANT CONFUSION

One of the strengths of the Reformed faith is its adherence to covenant theology. Our God is not only sovereign, but he is not fickle or capricious. He has definite, permanent, unalterable purposes, purposes, which have been fixed in eternity past. These fixed purposes have been revealed by God to man through his covenants with man. This is a matter of great blessing and assurance to the people of God. As Paul states it,

*“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil”* (Hebrews 6:17-19).

However, unfortunately, the testimony of God’s covenants, of God’s covenant promises, of God’s covenant blessings, and of God’s covenant faithfulness, has been severely muted in Reformed theology. It has been weakened and compromised by traditional covenant theology. Reformed theologians and Reformed Confessions have not accurately and faithfully set forth God’s covenants as they have been revealed in the history of redemption. Rather they have constructed an artificial covenant system, which most of the people in the pews barely understand. A good example of this is the dominant and most mature of the Reformed confessions, the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is adhered to by most Presbyterians in some form.

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The Westminster Confession of Faith deals with “*God’s Covenant with Man*” in chapter 7.\* It basically sets forth a two covenant system. It makes no reference with respect to the Trinitarian Covenant. It mentions the “*covenant of works*” as the “*first covenant made with man*”. And it only mentions one other covenant, the “*covenant of grace*”. These two are essentially the two covenants of the Westminster system of covenant theology. Now this in itself is not necessarily an insurmountable problem. It is true that the term “*covenant of grace*” does not even appear in the scriptures. However neither does the term, “*the Trinity*”, and the latter is a very sound and necessary scriptural concept, and it is clear that framers of the confession intended to use the former term in a similar manner. They state, “*This covenant (the covenant of grace) was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel*”. What they intended to do is make the term “*covenant of grace*” an umbrella for all of God’s gracious covenants apart from the covenant of works. The problem is that they never adequately identified and defined these other covenants. In the matter of the Trinity the contrast is clear. All three members of the Trinity are clearly defined, their deity and attributes set forth, and there is an amplification and clarification of this doctrine by the use of this term.

The only two Biblical covenants actually identified as being included in the “*covenant of grace*” are “*the law*” and “*the gospel*”. These two obviously represent the Sinaitic Covenant and the New Covenant. That the framers of the Confession were mainly thinking of two, these two covenants, when they set forth the concept of the “*covenant of grace*” is also apparent from the following statement. “*There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations*”. However in the scripture proofs for the Confession’s statements scriptures are quoted that refer to various divine covenants. The scripture

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\* See Appendix 1

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proofs for the statements made with respect to the “*covenant of grace*” include references to the Edenic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and New Covenants. But if they had all these covenants in mind when they formulated their doctrine why did they not identify them? And even if they had there would still have been two covenants totally ignored, the Trinitarian and the Davidic.

This is terribly confusing. The whole Reformed system of covenant theology has been built on the concept of an overarching covenant, the “*covenant of grace*”, that has never been scripturally defined. And this confusion is further compounded by the fact that the Westminster Confession sets two covenants in apposition to each other. These are the “*covenant of works*” and the “*covenant of grace*”. The scriptures also have two covenants that are constantly set in apposition to each and compared, but these are the Sinaitic and the New Covenants, the Old and the New. The “*covenant of works*” and the “*covenant of grace*” are never directly compared to each other in the scriptures. Only the two covenant heads, the first Adam, and the Second Adam, Jesus Christ are compared by Paul in Romans 5. So Paul’s covenant allegory in Galatians and Paul’s covenant comparisons in Hebrews correspond to different administrations of the “*covenant of grace*” in the Westminster system, rather than corresponding to different covenants. And of course the distinction, consistently maintained throughout the scriptures, between the Abrahamic and the Sinaitic Covenants, which forms the heart of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, is entirely obliterated in the Westminster system. And even the Sinaitic Covenant and the New Covenant are never referred to by name, simply being addressed by the synonyms of “*the law*” and “*the gospel*”. This has to be extremely confusing to the average person in the pew, especially without any adequate definition of the covenant of grace. It is obviously also confusing to many pastors. I have noted sermons where the minister has referred to the “*Old Covenant*” by scripture references to several distinct Biblical



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covenants. It is to clear up such confusion that this book has been written.

### CHAPTER 9 COVENANT HERESIES

There are a number of errors that stem directly from a failure to correctly understand and distinguish the several divine covenants. Some of these errors are significant. We will review three of them below. Since it is not the purpose of this book to seek to refute these errors, but simply to demonstrate the importance of correctly understanding God's covenants, our remarks will be brief.

#### **Dispensationalism:**

The first error is dispensationalism. Dispensationalism is not wrong per se. That is, it is not incorrect or unscriptural to believe that believers have lived under various dispensations of divine grace. The Westminster Confession itself states as much when it teaches, "*There are not therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations*". That there have been different dispensations throughout history is so obvious that to deny it would be folly. What then is the error of the Dispensationalists?

The dispensations of the Dispensationalists conform generally to the dispensations mentioned by the Westminster Confession. That is they generally follow the administration of the various divine covenants.\* And therefore of course it would

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\* Scofield lists the first dispensation as "*Innocency*". This would therefore correspond to the period of time when Adam and Eve were tested under the Covenant of Works, but Scofield calls that arrangement the "*Edenic Covenant*". The second dispensation is listed as "*Conscience*". This is meant to represent the period of time after the fall into sin, when in Scofield's thought, mankind was tested with respect to their new found knowledge of good and evil. There is however no clear link to the Edenic Covenant, which Scofield calls the "*Adamic Covenant*". The third dispensation is that of "*Human Government*" and clearly corresponds to the

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be unscriptural to deny the existence of these “dispensations”. We may prefer to call them covenants, or covenant administrations, but by whatever name, they certainly exist. The problem with the Dispensationalist viewpoint is that they regard all these dispensations as being totally distinct and separate from each other. They do not see that they form one grand whole. They do not perceive that they are all connected. Specifically they fail to see that they are all based on previous covenants and constitute a fulfillment of prior covenant promises. They lack unity between all these dispensations. They lack the overarching principle that unites them all into one grand whole, that the Westminster divines sought to provide in the concept of a single covenant of grace. They lack the unity that the Trinitarian Covenant provides as the basis for all of God’s covenants with man.

This approach leads to another error. It compounds the initial error by then of necessity viewing each prior dispensation as having passed away. In actuality, we have seen that the only covenant administration that has passed away is that of the Sinaitic Covenant. The other covenants are still in force. They form the foundation for later covenants and find their fulfillment in them. The Noahic Covenant is still in force. According to Paul the Abrahamic Covenant is still in force. As long as Christ reigns the Davidic Covenant will be in force. But all this is lost on the Dispensationalists. They have nothing but the present dispensation. And even that will pass away in favor

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Noahic Covenant. The fourth is listed as the dispensation of the “*Promise*”, and the fifth that of the “*Law*”. Again, clearly, these correspond to the Abrahamic and the Sinaitic Covenants respectively. The sixth is the dispensation of “*Grace*” and the seventh that of the “*Kingdom*”. These correspond to the present age under the New Covenant and to the future ultimate fulfillment of the New Covenant, when the Kingdom of God is realized in all its fulness and glory after the return of Christ. So generally one can say that these dispensations follow the various covenant administrations although not all covenants are included and some dispensations have no clear covenantal link.

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of the “*Kingdom Age*” which will be marked by the restoration of physical Israel, and the end of the “*Church Age*”, accenting the false dichotomy between Israel and the Church. If Dispensationalism is a reaction to the deficiencies of Reformed covenant theology it is doubly unfortunate, because they have thrown the baby out with the bath water and compounded the errors that they sought to correct.

### **Theonomy:**

Theonomy or Christian Reconstructionism\* is another error based on a misunderstanding of the covenants. The basis for most of the distinctive teachings of this movement is the belief that the Sinaitic Covenant is still in force, that the requirements of the Sinaitic Covenant are normative for our times. While we have disputed with the Dispensationalists because they have failed to see the unity and continuity of the various divine covenants we have the opposite problem here. Here the issue is an excess of continuity. Here the issue is that a covenant that has passed away is still embraced and adhered to.

The specific issue with the Theonomists is their application of the laws that were given Israel under the Sinaitic Covenant. These can be subsumed under three heads, ceremonial, judicial, and moral. The moral law, comprehended in the Ten Commandments, is generally accepted by all as still being in force (This is generally true except for some dispensationalists who contest even the continuing validity of that part of the Sinaitic Covenant). The moral law preceded the Sinaitic Covenant, being given to Adam and written in his heart, and it survived the passing away of that covenant. All Christians generally believe that the ceremonial law has passed away. However some Theonomists cling to portions of it such as the dietary laws and a propensity to ecclesiastical ritualism, church

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\* See the author’s forthcoming book, “*A Guide to Christian Reconstructionism, Analysis and Critique*”, for a full exposition of the beliefs, strengths, and weaknesses of this movement.

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calendars etc. But it is especially in their adherence to the judicial laws of Israel that Theonomists set themselves apart from mainstream Christianity. Here their failure to appreciate the passing away of this covenant has led them to maintain the continuing validity and applicability of these laws under the New Covenant.

Here again we see errors that are founded on a mistaken view of the covenants. The belief that The New Covenant is based on a continuing Sinaitic Covenant instead of replacing it has led to significant departures from historic Christianity.

### **Anabaptism:**

The final error that we will examine is Anabaptism. Anabaptism comes from the Greek work “anabaptismos”, meaning second baptism. Before the Anabaptists professing Christians were baptized with their children. This was in accordance with the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant that God would be a God to us and our seed after us. Baptism was seen as replacing the Abrahamic sacrament of circumcision, which was performed on the male children of all believers. The nature of the sacrament was seen as staying the same but the symbolism was changed to reflect the coming of Christ, the promised Seed, and the making of the one true blood sacrifice on Calvary. This was done because every divine covenant made with man was made with a representative man and his seed. This was true of the Noahic, the Abrahamic, the Sinaitic, and the Davidic. Since the New Covenant replaced the Sinaitic and was made with the same parties, this principle continued. However at the time of the Reformation a sect known as the Anabaptists disputed this. They had other problems in including a radical and revolutionary rejection of civil government etc. But their identifying trademark was their rejection of infant baptism. Since most professing Christians of the period had already been baptized as infants they became known as Anabaptists, as those who were baptized twice.

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Believing only in adult believer's baptism, they were all rebaptized upon their profession of faith and were thus baptized for the second time.

Now it is obvious that this is a covenant issue. It is clear that this error is based on a misapprehension of the divine covenants. Essentially the Anabaptists have confused and commingled two covenants. They have failed to distinguish the Abrahamic and the Sinaitic Covenants. They have properly seen that the Sinaitic Covenant has passed away. However failing to separate it from the Abrahamic, they have voided the applicability of both covenants. Specifically Anabaptists have argued that circumcision is related to the Sinaitic Covenant. They have argued that it was a sacramental sign to identify physical Israel under that Covenant. They have ignored the scripture witness that circumcision is of the Abrahamic Covenant. They have failed to see the faith requirement of that Covenant, a faith requirement for circumcision clearly revealed in the scriptures. And they have failed to note the testimony of our Lord who taught, "*Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man*" (John 7:22). Christ taught that circumcision was of the fathers, that it was of the patriarchs, specifically the patriarch Abraham. Failing to see covenant continuity, the Anabaptists have rejected the principle that God is a God to his people and their seed after them. They rejected the principle that God makes his covenant with us and with our seed after us. They therefore rejected infant baptism. This too is a covenant error.

More could be said but these errors are enough to prove the point. And that point is that a misunderstanding of the covenants can be a fruitful source of errors in one's theology. And that is another reason why this book has been written.

**CHAPTER 10**  
**TOWARDS A BIBLICAL COVENANT THEOLOGY**

All human disputations must come to an end. The purpose and scope of this book is not to answer all the issues that may arise with respect to the covenants. Obviously much more could have been said with respect to any of these covenants and the foregoing treatment of them was far from exhaustive. And obviously even if one acknowledges the shortcomings of the historic position and accepts the basic covenant scheme set forth in this work many issues will remain. Even among those who adopt the position of this book many significant differences can continue to exist. For example I have probably minimized my coverage of and the significance of the Edenic Covenant. Others may give it a far larger place in their covenant schemes. I have sought to give a scriptural resolution to the age-old conflicts concerning Israel and the church. I have sought to do this on the basis of a better, fuller, and more scriptural understanding of the divine covenants. Others may on the basis of a similar covenant scheme, resolve these issues in an alternate, or even a better way.

The main points of this work are to show the problems associated with the current views of Reformed covenant theology. The chief purpose was to expound a different model of covenant theology that recognizes all the divine covenants that are revealed in the scriptures and sets forth their purposes, their fulfillment, and their relationship to each other. I intended to show that this more scriptural model of covenant theology can not really be reconciled with the older model that seeks to cram the Biblical covenants into a preconceived pattern dominated by only two covenants. I intended to show the problems that can arise in one's systematic theology when the covenants are not correctly identified and understood. The lesson that I really wanted to hammer home is that all these issues must be resolved in the framework of a better

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understanding of the actual covenants that are progressively revealed throughout scripture.

This book is not to be considered as anything like a comprehensive, much less a final word on the covenants. Even as I have built on those who have gone before and benefited from those who have taught me, I pray that this book will be used to encourage others to build on these truths and labor towards a better, fuller, and more scriptural covenant theology.

The extreme importance of these covenants cannot be overemphasized. They form the very foundation for our redemption, of our salvation in Jesus Christ. Through these covenants, we are, as the elect of God in Jesus Christ, as the true seed of Abraham, as the real Israel of God, heir to all manner of great and precious promises, for time as well as for eternity. Only a fool would not carefully study the actual terms of a will that endows one with such eternal fortunes, with such incorruptible treasures, that they surpass all human description and imagination.

It is my hope and prayer that each reader of this book will come a better understanding of these blessed covenants that have their origin in the gracious purposes of a sovereign God. Amen!



## APPENDIX 1

### THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH

#### Chapter 7

#### Of God's Covenant with Man

**Section I:** The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant.<sup>a</sup>

**Section II:** The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works,<sup>b</sup> wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity,<sup>c</sup> upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.<sup>d</sup>

**Section III:** Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second,<sup>e</sup> commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein He freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ; requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved,<sup>f</sup> and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto eternal life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing, and able to believe.<sup>g</sup>

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a. Isaiah 40:13-17; Job 9:32-33; 1 Samuel 2:25; Psalm 113:5-6; Psalm 100:2-3; Job 22:2-3; Job 35:7-8; Luke 17:10; Acts 17:24-25.

b. Galatians 3:12

c. Romans 10:5; Romans 5:12-20.

d. Genesis 2:17; Galatians 3:10.

e. Galatians 3:21; Romans 8:8; Romans 3:20-21; Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 42:6

f. Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16; Romans 10:6, 9; Galatians 3:11

g. Ezekiel 36:26-27; John 6:44-45

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**Section IV:** This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in Scripture by the name of a testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.<sup>h</sup>

**Section V:** This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law, and in the time of the gospel:<sup>i</sup> under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision, the paschal lamb, and other types and ordinances delivered to the people of the Jews, all foreshadowing Christ to come;<sup>k</sup> which were, for that time, efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah,<sup>l</sup> by whom they had full remission of sins, and eternal salvation; and is called the Old Testament.<sup>m</sup>

**Section VI:** Under the gospel, when Christ the substance,<sup>n</sup> was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper,<sup>o</sup> which, though fewer in number, and administered with more simplicity, and less outward glory, yet, in them, it is held forth in more fulness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy,<sup>p</sup> to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles,<sup>q</sup> and is called the New Testament.<sup>r</sup> There are not

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h. Hebrews 9:15-17; Hebrews 7:22; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25

i. 2 Corinthians 3:6-9

k. Hebrews 8-10; Romans 4:11; Colossians 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 5:7

l. 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Hebrews 11:13; John 8:56

m. Galatians 3:7-9, 14

n. Colossians 2:17

o. Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

p. Hebrews 12:22-27; Jeremiah 31:33-34

q. Matthew 28:19; Ephesians 2:15-19

r. Luke 22:20

## The Trinitarian Covenant

therefore two covenants of grace, differing in substance, but one and the same, under various dispensations.<sup>8</sup>

### CONFESSION OF FAITH OF THE AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Chapter 7 Of God's Covenants

**Section I:** Before the foundation of the world the persons of the Godhead made the Trinitarian Covenant to bring to pass the theocratic kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>1</sup>

**Section II:** The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he has been pleased to express by way of covenant.<sup>2</sup>

**Section III:** The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam and in him to his

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s. Galatians 3:14, 16; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:21-23, 30; Psalm 32:1 with Romans 4:3, 6, 16-17, 23-24; Hebrews 13:8

1. Acts 15:18; Ephesians 1:3-4; Hebrews 10:5, 7; Acts 2:23; (See also Acts 4:27-28; John 17:4-6; Luke 22:22; II Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; Revelation 13:8; Matthew 25:34)

2. Isaiah 55:8-9; Romans 1:20; Job 9:32-33; (See also Isaiah 40:13-17; I Samuel 2:25; Psalm 113:5-6; Psalm 100:2-3; Job 22:2-3; Job 35:7-8; Luke 17:10; Acts 17:24-25)

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posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.<sup>3</sup> In the family covenant which God also instituted with Adam, the family unit was established as the basis of society to populate the earth with a godly seed and to gain dominion over it.<sup>4</sup>

**Section IV:** Man, by his fall, having made himself incapable of life by the covenant of works, the Lord was pleased to make another, called the Edenic, wherein he promised that Jesus Christ, the seed of the woman, would redeem man by his blood, cover them with his righteousness, and destroy their enemy Satan.<sup>5</sup>

**Section V:** After unrestrained wickedness culminated in the judgments of the flood,<sup>6</sup> God made a covenant with Noah establishing civil government to enforce the second table of the law and restrain wickedness,<sup>7</sup> and promising to spare the earth from utter destruction so that human society might be preserved and the purpose of the family be realized until Christ, the Seed, should come and the elect be gathered.<sup>8</sup>

**Section VI:** To provide for the spiritual welfare of the family, God made a covenant with Abraham establishing the visible church, wherein he would be their God and they would be his people,<sup>9</sup> and promised that in his seed, the Christ, would all families of the earth be blessed.<sup>10</sup> God also promised that a great nation and kings would come from him,<sup>11</sup> and to him and

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3. Galatians 3:12; Romans 10:5; (See also Romans 5:12-20; and Chapter 6, Section 3)

4. Genesis 1:27-28; Malachi 2:15

5. Genesis 3:15, 21; Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 5:12-18, 19; Romans 16-20

6. Genesis 6:5-7, 17; Romans 13

7. Genesis 9:5-7

8. Genesis 9:11-13

9. Genesis 17:1, 2, 7, 9-10 (See also Genesis 12 and 15)

10. Galatians 3:16

11. Genesis 17:6

## The Trinitarian Covenant

his seed the land of Canaan would be given in order to fulfill his purpose of the theocratic kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>12</sup>

**Section VII:** In furtherance of God's purpose a covenant was made with Israel,<sup>13</sup> the elect nation,<sup>14</sup> at Sinai, placing them in a theocratic relationship<sup>15</sup> and giving them provisional possession of the land of promise upon condition of national obedience to the law.<sup>16</sup>

**Section VIII:** In partial fulfillment of the terms of the Abrahamic covenant God established an everlasting covenant with David, the king,<sup>17</sup> to provide out of his seed a theocratic king, the Christ, who would sit on David's throne and rule over the elect nation forever in a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.<sup>18</sup>

**Section IX:** Israel broke the covenant that God made with them at Sinai; therefore, he made a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, established on better promises, whereby he would call to himself a holy nation.<sup>19</sup> This covenant, initiated by Christ and sealed with his blood, replaced the Sinaitic and was extended to include the Gentiles, who by faith were grafted into the elect nation, thus breaking down the middle wall of partition.<sup>20</sup>

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12. Genesis 17:8; Acts 7:5; Hebrews 11:9-10, 13

13. Exodus 24:7-8

14. Isaiah 45:4; (See also Deuteronomy 7:6-8)

15. I Samuel 8:7; Deuteronomy 5

16. Leviticus 26:3, 14, 28, 32

17. II Samuel 7:11-16

18. Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:32-33; Acts 2:30; Revelation 19:15-16; II Peter 3:3, 4, 13

19. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13; Zechariah 11:10-14; Matthew 21:42-43

20. Matthew 26:26-29; Hebrews 9:14-15; Romans 11:17 (See also verses 11-32); Ephesians 2:13-14

